

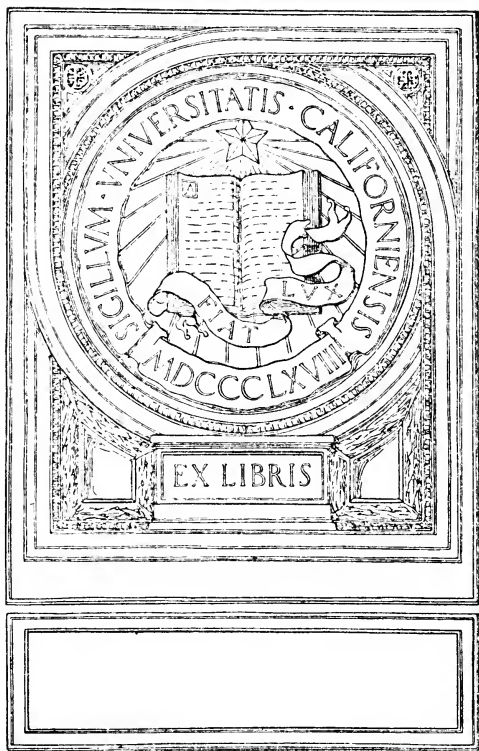
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The Colonel's
* Daughter
or
Winning his Spurs
—
King





THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER;

OR,

WINNING HIS SPURS.

BY

CAPT. CHARLES KING, U. S. A.



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TO
MRS. JAMES B. RICKETTS,
WHO,
WHETHER SHARING THE LOT OF WOUNDED PRISONER,
OR
GRACING THE HIGHEST CIRCLES OF SOCIETY,
HAS BEEN
THE DEVOTED WIFE TO ONE,
THE
FAITHFUL FRIEND TO MANY A SOLDIER,
THIS
ARMY STORY IS DEDICATED.

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PREFACE.

MR. RALPH WALDO EMERSON is responsible for the statement that "Spartans, stoics, heroes, saints, and gods use a short and positive speech." This may account for the fact that there are no conversations worth reading in this entire story.

The spontaneous wisdom and eloquence that animate the characters of Bulwer and Disraeli to the habitual and familiar use of language outrivalling the diction of Richelieu; the colossal attainments of the natives neighboring Chattanooga, as set forth in St. Elmo, and discovered (by aid of the unabridged) in their off-hand chats; the wit and sparkle of that phenomenally delicious couple, Tom and Bessie, who irradiate not only "One Summer," but every season in which they may be encountered,—all will be found wanting herein. My people simply talk, as people in the line of the army *will* talk,—most prosaically.

When it comes to portraying life in the staff, as opposed to existence in the fighting force, needless to say some other pen must be employed than that of

THE AUTHOR.

November, 1882.

THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER;

OR,

WINNING HIS SPURS.

CHAPTER I.

"SERGEANT-MAJOR!"

"Sir-r-r!" and the rasp and rattle of a hastily-moved chair preceded but an instant the appearance of a soldierly form in the doorway.

"That Prescott mail's late again to-day?"

"Yes, sir; been late every time last three trips."

The sergeant-major clips his words as close as his cropped hair and uses no superfluities. Having said so much he waits, mutely "standing attention," for his superior's next remark. The latter is dreamily contemplating a pair of rather shapely feet perched on the desk in front of him, and tapping the boot-toes thereof with a long ruler. Finally he queries,—

"Think that man Finnegan's been drinking again?"

"Looks like it, sir; but can't say. Horse shows hard riding every night when he gets in; but you can see him for six miles up the valley, and he comes at an easy lope all the way from the Point."

The adjutant slowly lets down his long legs, quits his chair, takes from its case a signal-service binocular and saunters to the open doorway leading to the parade. His subordinate remains a moment, in his invariable attitude, at the door of the inner office, then, finding himself addressed no further, steps back quickly as he came.

Leaning against the post of the narrow piazza in front, the adjutant blinked his eyes in unwilling deference to the blazing sunlight and gazed out towards the north.

Before him, straight away, lay a level barren of gravelly earth, brown and desolate: no sprig of grass, no sign of shrub or tree; the parade of Camp Sandy, in the year of our Lord 187—, was as bald as the head of the commanding officer. Midway between the office and the glistening white line of picket-fence that spanned the northern limit of the garrison a lance-like staff shot upward into the burning vault of heaven, and from its summit hung motionless the heavy folds of blue and scarlet and white, the symbol of Yankee supremacy in the midst of surrounding desolation. It hung aloft as though paralyzed with wonderment at its unlovely companionship,—

“It hung in the heat like some bright dead bird,
And the air was so still you could hear the tramp
Of the pacing sentry all over the camp.”

Bounding this arid surface on right and left were two long lines of adobe buildings. Those on the eastern side, with their broad piazzas and mansard-roofs, indicating in greater pretence the homes of the officers of

the command; those on the left, low, one-storied, and colorless as the dun hue of the parade itself, the quarters of the men.

Beyond the former, a thousand yards away, rose a turreted palisade of conglomerate shale and yielding sandy earth that shut out wall-like all view to the east. At its foot rolled the shallow stream from which the post derived its sole supply of water. It never seemed to rain at Camp Sandy, though torrents might be descending in the mountains that shut it in. To the west, beyond the line of barracks, lay, in the same colorless clods of adobe, the cavalry stables,—the quartermaster's "corrals,"—and beyond them tumbled heaps of foot-hill rolling higher and higher until, in the near distance, they rose a thousand feet above the plateau and joined the long ridge of mountain-chain that stretched down, claw-like, from the grand range of the California Sierra. Northward the eye roamed over a valley hemmed in towards the setting sun by dark, pine-covered mountains, while on the other side, vivid, dazzling, scintillating in the blazing rays, lay the barren yet brilliant cliffs of the Red Rock country. The winding fringe of cottonwood in the valley depths—a lively green contrasted with the sombre hue of all nature near it—marked the course of the stream, and far, far to the north, plumb under the spot where the pole-star glowed at night, a snow-capped peak glistened and shimmered through the heated air, the one gleam of blessed coolness vouchsafed in the entire picture.

Still holding his binocular in his listless hand, the adjutant lounged in the shade of the porch, and gazed

drearily over the scene before him. Save the occasional lizard, darting about the sun-baked parade, no sign of life or motion greeted the eye. Along "officers' row" every blind was tightly closed against the blazing west. One or two sleeping forms could be detected along the shade-line of the opposite "quarters"; but even at the guard-house the sentry had been drawn inside, and was pacing the narrow corridor in front of the barred windows, through which swarthy, hungry-eyed Apache faces were doubtless glaring out in miserable hatred of their captors.

It was a cheerless scene, and in face and form, expression and attitude, there could be detected on the part of the one visibly wakeful being a thorough appreciation of its dreariness. Tall, "six feet two in his stockings," lithe and thin in flank, but with massive shoulders and powerful limbs, the adjutant's form would have enraptured the life guardsmen of England. Clad in the coolest of white duck and flannel, every line of his frame was patent to the observer, and the head and face were fitting accompaniment. Eyes of darkest hazel, a straight, slender, broad-nostriled nose, a mouth firm and clear-cut under the curling moustache, chin and jaw square, resolute, and clean-shaven, forehead broad and white, in odd contrast to the bronze that spread over face and neck, hair that might have been dark and wavy in boyish days, but now close-cropped to the shapely head, the adjutant was well termed among his comrades a "splendid-looking fellow." Yet at this moment the whole face was marred by its expression of utter weariness and discontent.

Turning sharply with a disgusted snap of the case,

he looked at the thermometer hanging well back in the shade,—

“One hundred at 5 P.M.! Well! not so bad as yesterday, but hot enough for Tophet. What *in* Tophet did we ever take this hole from Mexico for anyhow?” is the muttered comment that falls from his lips. “An ape or a Greaser is the only thing on two legs fit to live in this infernal Arizona, and yet, by gad, here’s old Pelham going to bring his wife and daughter out to join.”

Something in the absurdity of this last idea provoked a smile upon the face of Mr. John Truscott, adjutant of Uncle Sam’s —th regiment of cavalry, and while he did not give way to soliloquy his thoughts ran somewhat as follows:

“She’s the girl” (she being, of course, Miss Pelham, the daughter aforementioned) “the youngsters have all been raving about for the last two years. Just finished school in New York, but spent her last two summers at West Point, and had no end of adorers in the graduating class. I half fancy Glenham to be one of her victims. Almighty good thing for her and the old folks if he *is*, for the Fates have blessed him with infinite lucre, and those three boys of Pelham’s have drained him poor as—as, begad, as I am. Wonder what she’s like anyhow? You never can tell from what these young fledglings say. Good Lord! how long it is since I’ve had a glimpse of a pretty face, or anything civilized!”

Mechanically, Mr. Truscott turned once more northward, and, adjusting the glass, took a long survey of the valley and the point where the road disappeared

among the mountains. This time, with better success, his practised eye noted the faintly visible whiffs of dust, rising at intervals beyond the cottonwoods, yet four miles away.

A sudden clatter of hoofs came rapidly up the slope in rear of the office from the south, and a horse and rider plunged into space by his side.

"Mail in yet, Jack?" shouted a fresh cheery voice, and the sunburnt, bright-eyed young face of the horseman beamed down upon the adjutant.

"Nary," is that official's inelegant but terse reply. "Coming though, I think," he adds, as he notes the shade of disappointment creeping over the features of his interrogator. "Where have you been?" he asks. "You must find riding hot work such a day as this?"

"Can't help it," replies the junior, swinging lightly to the ground. "Old Catnip says those herds have got to be visited by the officer of the day at least once before stable-call, and I made it late as I could. You look bored to death, Jack."

Now, just why every officer in that garrison should invariably address Mr. Truscott as "Jack" is one of those mysteries which has puzzled metaphysicians. Some profound thinker has recorded as the result of his observations that a man hailed by his fellow-men by his Christian name may be beloved, but is always "blind to his own interests." The two fit into one another after a fashion, for it usually happens that the man "blind to his own interests" is apt to be the most unselfish and considerate fellow imaginable, and as such is apt to be popular, and, in army circles, to have "troops of friends" until, in his blindness, he stumbles

into a scrape, when it is curious to mark how quickly the "Jack" gives place to the distant surname, and the friends dwindle to few. Mr. Truscott *was* popular, but it rose from no pronounced "blindness to his own interests." He was generous, even lavish, in his way, but with all the fact of an acknowledged intellectual superiority over his comrades, and the record of being a splendid soldier and a "thorough-bred" gentleman, the best explanation of his popularity, perhaps, is to be found in the remarks of Captain Tanner on the subject. "I like Truscott," said he, "because in the eight years I've known him he has never spoken ill of a man behind his back, and because he holds a woman's name as sacred." The knot of officers to whom this opinion was delivered contained no dissenter. Yet Mr. Truscott had his enemies. A certain uncompromising "hit-or-miss" way of doing his duty, and coming down hard on delinquents, had stirred the rancor of more than one of his brethren, who, negligent or ignorant themselves, had no patience with his sternly military system, and, having been rapped over the official knuckles by the commanding officer, they would gladly have seen the adjutant deposed from his influential position. Nor was it among his own sex that Mr. Truscott had acquaintances who were not all well-wishers. In the utter isolation of that distant station those ladies of the regiment who had followed their husbands in their exile (and perchance brought unmarried sisters with them) had, or fancied they had, little else to talk of than the affairs of the garrison and of their neighbors. Possibly that very trait which so aroused the enthusiasm of Captain Tanner, "that he held sacred a

woman's name, and could not be brought to speak ill of one," was the very thing which rendered him unbearable to some three or four of their number. For how inexpressibly stupid in the eyes of one woman is the man who cannot be induced, for her entertainment, to criticise another!

Treating them one and all alike with a certain grave courtesy and gentle deference, he trod metaphorically upon the sweeping trains of both Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Turner, and in the observance of a strict neutrality had at one time or other given offence to these rival belles of the garrison. "Why," said Mrs. Raymond, "I merely hinted to him at the hop last week that Mrs. Curtis's last dress from San Francisco must have been a frightful tax on her husband's pay, and you know it was, and he drew himself into his shell in that awfully superior way of his and fairly snubbed me." Now, Mr. Truscott was incapable of "snubbing" any woman. Grant-like, he fell back upon an inflexible silence when pressed for his opinion on matters of which he chose not to speak. But this passive rebuke was to women of Mrs. Raymond's calibre as exasperating as an active "snub," and in her feline way she resented it.

Neither she nor her sisters in garrison cared to declare open war against the best-looking man and one of the best partners in the command. Besides, Mr. Truscott had a way of showing very delicate attentions to the ladies of the regiment, though distributing all such with a strict impartiality; for whether from hunting, a trip to Prescott, or the rare luxury of a "leave" in San Francisco, he seldom returned without an acceptable remembrance for each and every one. Then,

too, he had all the latest books and magazines. "He kept up his reading," as the officers said, and his taste was indisputable. Younger officers went to him in their troubles and perplexities, sure of sympathy, and surer still of inviolable confidence; older officers, sorely against their will at times, consulted his opinions on matters wherein they should have been, but were not, thoroughly informed. But for his part, it was a circumstance of frequent remark that he never once was known to seek advice or sympathy, and never alluded to affairs of his own. Many and various were the theories advanced as to why Mr. Truscott, at the age of thirty, remained unmarried. Most of his brother-officers had taken unto themselves wives, and were as happy as is possible under such circumstances, but to all questions, however deftly put, bearing upon the matter, the adjutant replied with imperturbable gravity that he thought too much of the sex in the abstract to offer it anything so unworthy its acceptance.

There were matrons in the regiment who looked upon him as a most eligible catch for a younger sister, and who had imported such sisters in days when the —th was stationed in climes more accessible for the avowed purpose of capturing the tall subaltern, but Jack appeared as serenely unconscious of their wiles as he did of the oft-thrown signal for flirtation from some of the giddy matrons themselves. Tradition had it that Mr. Truscott's obduracy was due to a love-affair of long standing; that since the days of his graduation he had adored and been adored by a damsel far away in Massachusetts, and for a time it was known that delicate missives with a womanly superscription reached

him from that quarter; but, some three years before, he had gone East on a long leave of absence, and when the regiment received orders for Arizona had suddenly reappeared in their midst, older, graver, and at times very absent-minded, but never since had he sought further opportunity of going to "the States," and his secret, whatever it might be, was buried in his own bosom. Wherever there are women there are apt to be audacious flirts, and many a time had some practised coquette baited her hook in the vain hope of getting a rise from the adjutant of the —th. It would be a reflection on his sagacity to say that he did not see the fly, but he possessed the faculty of appearing so utterly obtuse as not to see it, and, whether real or assumed, his indifference was unmistakable. Nellie Blossom, the brightest, merriest, and withal the fairest girl known to military circles in the West,—the niece of one of the prominent officers of the department,—had actually been accused by the critical matrons of the garrisons of Prescott and Camp Sandy of having thrown herself at Jack Truscott's head. But she had returned to San Francisco wiser if not sadder, and was last heard of flirting desperately with the artillerymen at Alcatraz and the Presidio, and when inquisitive Circes of Camp Sandy sought to probe Jack's inner consciousness, they received for all answer an assurance that if he could admire any one as much as he did the ladies of the —th, that lady was Miss Blossom.

One day "Old Catnip," as he was popularly termed, Colonel Pelham, as he was known officially, electrified the garrison of Camp Sandy by the information that Mrs. Pelham and his daughter Grace were coming out

to join. Now, it is a peculiarity of the ladies of the army that the simple announcement of a fact is as stimulative of conjecture and reflection as was the fall of Isaac Newton's apple. There wasn't a woman in all Camp Sandy who did not immediately set to work to fathom the motives of Mrs. Pelham in thus suddenly starting for such an utterly out-of-the-way place as Arizona; and there was not a woman in all Camp Sandy who by noon on the following day had not decided that she was coming to capture Lieutenant Arthur Glenham and his handsome fortune. Grace was a girl of sixteen at school when the regiment was hurried to the Pacific coast, and Mrs. Pelham had decided to remain in New York until her daughter's education was completed. Each summer she had gone with her to West Point, where Grace had been an acknowledged belle among the cadets, and where frank, whole-souled young Glenham had most unequivocally shown himself an adorer. It was said that he had gone so far as to offer himself to Grace, saying humbly that "he wasn't much to look at, but at least he could offer the woman he loved a home and an ample fortune." Grace never told it to a soul, nor had she encouraged the boy, but a sharp-sighted mamma had noted every symptom, and speedily won from Glenham himself a statement of his prospects financial, and had bidden him hope as regarded his prospects otherwise. Meantime, jolly old Pelham had established his headquarters at Sandy, and his red face and bald head could be seen for an hour each morning at the office, after which they were invisible until sundown, when he reappeared on the veranda of his quarters ready to chat with any one

who came along, and was completely happy if three or four of his officers would consent to spend the evening and play whist with him.

Glenham's classmates had exchanged some sly witticisms when the order assigning him to Pelham's regiment was received, and it was said at Sandy that the colonel eyed the young gentleman very sharply when he reported for duty. "Mr. Truscott," said he, "I think that young fellow has some good points about him. Suppose you take him in hand and draw him out." So it happened that Glenham had been welcomed to the adjutant's quarters, and, as there were by no means houses enough to give each subaltern a "set" to himself, he had there remained to this day.

It was Arthur Glenham himself who reined up at the adjutant's office, and it was his cheery voice that accosted Truscott in eager inquiry for the mail.

The two officers were a striking contrast. Glenham was short in stature, broad of shoulder, stout of limb, with a face almost as broad in proportion as his body, with merry laughing blue eyes, a large mouth, expanded in the perpetual grin which his perfect teeth rendered excusable, a face and form, in fact, indicative of the utmost good nature, if not of the utmost intellect. And Glenham was more than good-natured. He possessed a trait rare as is an unconscious manner in those men to whose grandsires wealth was unknown. His bounty was lavish, yet no comrade was allowed to feel that he was the victim of a special favor. As a consequence, young Arthur was frequently imposed upon by the rank and file of the regiment, who were incessantly coming to know "Would the loot'nint lind

me the loan of tin dollars till pay day?" and then, in emulation of Captain Costigan of convivial memory, going off to disburse the amount at the sutler's store.

For a long time Truscott noted the frequent appearance of the worst class of men in the command at the back door of his quarters; they invariably inquired for Lieutenant Glenham, and always wanted to see him alone. Truscott said nothing; but had no difficulty in divining the object of these visits. One day, however, the colonel was more conflagratory in temper than was customary; "I'm willing to put up with the pay-day spree," was the warrior's remark, after some indirect profanity, "but here's the guard-house cram-full of the old toppers of the garrison this morning, and the sutler swears he hasn't trusted them a cent's worth. Now where in blazes did they get their money?"

Finding himself addressed, the adjutant replied that he "thought he could find out, and, furthermore, could put a stop to it in future." Pelham stared hard at his subordinate for a moment, as though he half detected the fact of his entire knowledge of the source of supply. He longed to press the matter and extract further information, but in the calm gravity of Mr. Truscott's manner he was vividly reminded of the experience of a former colonel of the regiment, and having been in the habit of declaring that it served the colonel right, he turned sharply on his heel and walked to his private desk. A moment more and his voice was heard, placid and low, "Very well, Truscott; you attend to it."

The story of this previous experience was an old one in the regiment, indeed, had been told all over the

Plains. Its former colonel was blessed with a wife, daughters, and as many unmarried feminine relations as Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B., and ordinarily half a dozen of them were his guests in garrison. His adjutant, a consumptive relic of the war, had won his undying gratitude by taking a sister-in-law off his hands, but, as he was compelled to bury that adjutant with military honors some six months afterwards, and subsequently to provide for both the fatherless and the widow, the benefit was but temporary. Then he summoned Truscott to headquarters, and appointed him adjutant *vice* the defunct brother-in-law. Truscott speedily showed consummate ability in the performance of his duties, but a correspondent lack of inclination for the delicate functions of his predecessor. Resisting all feminine wiles, he declined to spend his unoccupied hours in dancing attendance upon the sisters, cousins, and daughters, though always showing them scrupulous attention at the garrison hops; but there was one thing in which he utterly differed from the deceased, and in which he succeeded in winning the ill will of every woman in the colonel's household, and, of course, before long that of the colonel himself. Nothing would induce him to talk to them of the affairs of any officer or lady in or out of the regiment, and no longer could they derive information from the man whose position enabled him to be "well posted."

This was outrageous. "The idea that the adjutant of my husband's regiment is going to ignore *my* position is something I'll not tolerate," was the repeated remark of "*Madame la Colonelle*" to her cronies in the garrison. "You'll see that he cannot hold it a week."

Naturally, in *less* than a week, Mr. Truscott, from a dozen different sources, received what "his friends" chose to denominate "warnings," but he went on about his duties as usual, for the colonel had many soldierly qualities that he firmly respected. It pained him greatly to note the daily increasing coldness and injustice of the commanding officer, but he said nothing.

One morning the storm broke. Something had gone wrong at the colonel's. They were then stationed in Kansas, near a large railway town, and it was a source of much gossip that several of the young officers were frequent visitors during the midnight hours at places of varied entertainment in the vicinity, but none had been absent from any roll-call or duty. There are always one or two officers to tell the colonel of such affairs, and always ten or a dozen women to tell the colonel's wife, which generally amounts to the same thing.

On this particular morning the colonel's face was wrathful, and he opened fire on his adjutant at once with,—

"Mr. Truscott, what officers were absent from reveille this morning?"

Truscott promptly rose, stood like a statue before his colonel, and calmly replied, "None, sir."

"Then you and they must have made almighty good time back from town. I am told you were playing poker at the Alhambra till after four this morning."

"So far as I am concerned your informant is mistaken. I was not out of the garrison, sir."

There were several officers sitting or standing about the room. Some slipped quietly out, unwilling to listen

to a conversation already so painful. Others remained, with attentive ears.

"At all events you know who *were* there, and I expect you, as my staff-officer, to inform me."

"It so happens, colonel, that I do not know. I have not even heard."

"Well, I know that you *do* know who were playing cards in Captain Lapham's quarters two nights ago, for you were seen coming from there at ten o'clock, and this was probably the same party."

"I was Captain Lapham's guest on that occasion, as were the others, colonel; and now I must say emphatically, but with all respect, that I never heard of such a thing as its being the duty of the adjutant to keep the commanding officer informed of the movements of the officers off duty, but as such seems to be your view, I beg to be relieved at once."

"You are, sir, you are; and, had I listened to advice, you would have been long ago," fairly roared the colonel. "Leave the office at once!" And, with the respect of every man in the regiment, Jack Truscott took himself back to his troop. Some time afterwards, over a year, promotions and retirements brought Colonel Pelham to the command of the —th, and about the first thing he did was to send for Truscott and re-instate him in the adjutancy.

From that day to this the colonel never regretted it, and it was with complete assurance that he left the matter of stopping the irregular supplies of the garrison to his staff-officer. Glenham's open-handed liberality met with a sudden check, nobody knew why or how, for what passed between Truscott and himself was

never mentioned, but a report rapidly gained credence in Camp Sandy that Mr. Glenham had lost a great deal of money in unfortunate investments. Soft-voiced sirens inquired of Mr. Truscott whether Glenham had said anything to him about his losses, and on Mr. Truscott's replying gravely that he had not, and merely bowing with equal gravity to the supplementary remark, "You know, as his room-mate and most intimate friend, I thought he probably would have told you. Of course, it's a matter I would never think of mentioning," the soft-voiced siren had retired in defeat, and conveyed her verdict to some chosen intimate that Mr. Glenham must have been speculating heavily, she "had been talking with Mr. Truscott, but don't for the world say I said so," etc. Consequently, when Colonel Riggs, the bluff old inspector-general of the department, dropped in at Sandy on his way from a hunt, and with his usual happy facility of hitting the nail on the head accosted Glenham with, "Hello, youngster! I hear you've been speculating and lost most of your money," the boy was indignant, and in denying the statement *in toto* demanded the name of Colonel Riggs's informant, so that in the course of the week there was an unpleasantness at Sandy, and Mrs. Turner lost one of her admirers. Between Truscott and Glenham there existed a firm friendship which nothing seemed to shake. The former was neither demonstrative nor outwardly warm in his manner to the younger man, but it was evident that he influenced him in everything,—his duties, his tastes, the employment of his time, and, though imperceptibly, in the selection of his friends and associates. On the other hand, Glen-

ham, in his impetuous and enthusiastic way, was wont to talk of Truscott and his admiration for him by the hour. So when it was noised abroad that Miss Grace Pelham was soon to arrive, and all the story of Glenham's devotion to her was renewed, it was with much amazement and more incredulity that the ladies of the garrison heard Mr. Truscott's answer of "Nothing," in response to their eager queries as to what Glenham had ever told him about her.

CHAPTER II.

Big with importance was Mrs. Captain Raymond when the mail from Prescott finally came in on this hot September evening and there was placed in her hands a letter from no less a personage than "Lady Pelham," as the —th was accustomed to designate the portly matron who shared the joys, sorrows, name, and much more than shared the stipend of the jolly colonel.

Seldom was it that her ladyship saw fit to honor the lesser lights of the regiment with letters written in her august hand. "Never indeed," said Mrs. Wilkins, who was not one of her ladyship's satellites, "unless she has an axe to grind or wants chestnuts pulled out of the fire." Mrs. Wilkins was rich in metaphor, but limited in elegance, and from the first had made an unfavorable impression on the new colonel's wife; but none the less was Mrs. Wilkins eager to hear the purport of her ladyship's communication, and so postponed her departure for tea, barely restraining her impatience until Mrs. Raymond had finished the eight closely-written pages and looked up, expectant of question. "What does she say about Grace and Mr. Glenham?" was the first propounded.

"W—ell," replied the recipient, slowly. "You mustn't mention it to a soul, because she says I'm not to allude to it; but, as you were here when the letter

came, why, I can't see how she can expect me to say that she did not mention the subject when she did ; but you mustn't breathe it. They are *not* engaged."

"Oh, of course I knew that all along," persisted Mrs. Wilkins ; "but what does she *say* ?"

And so after much interchange of solemn promises never to tell a soul or betray one another, Mrs. Raymond read to Mrs. Wilkins an extract pretty much as follows from the last page of her ladyship's letter :

"Oh, I knew there was something else I wanted to speak about. You know Mr. Glenham, of course, and very probably you have heard some silly rumor connecting dear Grace's name with his. Now let me assure you, my friend, there is absolutely nothing in it,—that is, of course, nothing definite. He was perfectly devoted to her at West Point, and evidently very much in love ; but Grace is so young, you know, so perfectly childlike, that his marked attention seemed to make no impression upon her, and no child of mine shall ever be coerced in a matter of the affections. Such things I look upon as criminal in a mother. Of course with his fine character and attainments, not to mention his means, it might not be a bad match for Gracie, though she *could* look much higher. You have no idea how lovely the child has grown, and only I can say how utterly sweet and lovable a daughter she is ; but she is very sensitive, and with regard to Mr. Glenham is painfully nervous at times about meeting him again. She gave him no encouragement at all, and assured me that her heart was untouched, but, as I say, she was very young and inexperienced, and no one can predict what may come of it. Now with your known tact it will

be an easy matter to give people to understand (without letting it be known that I wrote you) that there is no engagement, but that any allusion to the matter in Gracie's presence would be prejudicial"—"Yes, she has written prejudicial, then scratched it out and written painful," said Mrs. Raymond—"painful to her in the last degree. Some women are so heedless and others so malicious that it would be just like——" And here Mrs. Raymond stopped short with an embarrassed cough and "Well, that's about all," which Mrs. Wilkins did not at all believe, but went off homeward, confident that her ladyship had made a most uncomplimentary allusion to herself in the very line where Mrs. Raymond balked, which, in fact, she had.

"Don't tell me any such stuff," soliloquized the irate lady, as she banged the door of her own domicile behind. "That woman will bow down to and worship money wherever she sees it, and she'll just make that girl marry him. See if she don't." And at an early hour that evening Lieutenant Wilkins made his appearance at the card-room down at the store, a circumstance that by this time had become the generally accepted signal at Sandy that the wind was in the east at "Castle Wilkins," as that subaltern's quarters were dubbed by the "society" of the post.

To just how many more of her intimates that and other portions of her ladyship's letter were read by Mrs. Raymond is not of sufficient importance to relate. That she had revealed the chapter on Grace to one was sufficient to insure its speedy transmission throughout the garrison, not perhaps with strict accuracy as to detail, but with those unavoidable embellishments with

which the sex succeeds at most times in quadrupling the proportions of any story.

Mid-October came, and the blazing sun disappeared at an earlier hour behind the range to the west, and crimsoned and gilded the lofty battlements of Squaw Peak down the valley even as the evening recall from herd and fatigue duty was echoed from the mesa across the stream. With each succeeding day old Pelham waxed more jolly and jubilant, and huge were the preparations being made at the commanding officer's mansion for the reception of her ladyship and the sole daughter of his house and name.

"They sail from San Francisco to-morrow!" he shouted one evening to the knot of officers coming in from retreat roll-call, and waving the brown envelope of his dispatch, the colonel soon gathered his adherents about him. "They sail to-morrow. Come in everybody. Let's drink their health and wish them God-speed!" And the glad-hearted veteran set before them the unaccustomed luxury of fruity Cucumungo wine, the nectar of Californian vintage, and clinked his glass with one and all in joyous recognition of their cordial good wishes.

"I go all the way to the Colorado to meet them," said he. "They will reach Yuma by Tuesday fortnight, and the general has given me his own teams and ambulance to bring them to Prescott, and there all of you who can must come up to the ball the staff are to give them. We'll have lots of good times, and escort them down here in style."

Why was it that in his rejoicing the honest-hearted old fellow put forth his hand and rested it kindly on

young Glenham's broad shoulder, and that he looked into the boy's flushed and eager face with eyes suffused with unbidden tears? Every man in the party noted the fact, and even there some smiled significantly.

That night Truscott turned over lazily in his bed, where he had lain for some time listening for the regular breathing, placid as a baby's, that generally marked Glenham's slumber. Then he hailed through the open doorway, "Glenham, I wish you'd go to sleep and snore; I miss my lullaby. I've fixed it all with Wilkins that he is to take your duty for a week, so that you can have all that time in Prescott when the Pelhams come. Now do go to sleep, and don't toss about there any longer." And without another word or caring to hear Glenham's confused expression of thanks, Truscott turned his face to the wall again and was lost in his own reflections.

Early in November the "Newbern" was telegraphed at the mouth of the Colorado, and Colonel, Mrs., and Miss Pelham were the guests of the commanding officer at Yuma. Six days more and, their long drive across the desert completed, they would be at Prescott. It did not require half an eye at Sandy to mark how eager, nervous, and absent-minded Glenham had become. It had been arranged that six of the officers, including Truscott and himself, were to leave for Prescott as soon as the Pelhams arrived there, and that as many of the ladies of Camp Sandy were to accompany the party to take part in the festivities at headquarters. Grand times were anticipated. The staff of the commanding general were to give a ball in honor of the arrival of so noted an army lady as Mrs. Pelham and

so lovely an army girl as her daughter. Then the infantry officers of Fort Whipple were to give another, and there would be a series of dinner-parties, rides, drives, picnics, and possibly hunts in the neighboring mountains. The band of the infantry was daily practising the latest and most attractive music, imported from New York expressly for the occasion, and their energetically eccentric leader was grinning and capering and writhing himself into the verge of convulsions in his efforts to make them throw *espressione* into the waltz composed and most respectfully dedicated to her Eccellenza Signora Colonel Pelham by her most humble and admiring servant Paolo Bianchinnetti. Bandmaster Paolo was always composing and dedicating waltzes to the ladies of the senior officers, and trusting to luck to secure the kindly graces of the younger ones, in which course he was wiser in his generation than many a native, for while the dancing subalterns swore at him for his execrable time, the elders swore by him, and they held the balance of power.

The time was fast approaching. Captains Raymond, Turner, and Tanner, with their wives and the three young lady relatives who were to make up the party, were to drive in two large ambulances over the mountain roads to Prescott, while Truscott, Crane, and Glenham escorted them on horseback. The command of the post in Pelham's absence had devolved upon Captain Canker, a martinet in his way, and a man whom a little brief authority would transform into a nuisance. The party was to start on Monday morning, and on Sunday night, after parade, Mr. Wilkins came to Truscott with an air of profound embarrassment. "Jack,

I've got to go to Prescott after all. Mrs. Wilkins has set her heart on going within the last ten days, and I cannot get out of it." Truscott said not a word, so Wilkins stumbled painfully on, "I never wanted to go, and I know that it will disappoint Glenham, as I had promised to take his duties."

"You were to have taken his tour as officer of the day Tuesday, and to have attended his stable and company duties during the week," said Truscott. "When did you decide to go?"

"Not until this morning."

"Why didn't you tell me then?"

"Well, I thought Mrs. Wilkins would change her mind."

"When did you tell Captain Canker?" asked Jack, and a set look came into his face as he gazed straight into the eyes of the other.

"I told him this morning, and he said it was all right."

"That's all I want to know," said Truscott, and turning abruptly, he walked over to his office. Just as he expected, Captain Canker was seated there overhauling some late muster-rolls, and as Truscott entered, the temporary commander accosted him with, "Mr. Adjutant, you will notify Mr. Glenham that he cannot go to Prescott to-morrow as Mr. Wilkins is entitled to the preference, and he has decided to go."

Truscott replied, quietly, "Very good, sir," and seated himself at his desk as though the matter were definitely settled.

Now, Canker hated his colonel, who had on several occasions interfered with his harsh and arbitrary sys-

tem as troop commander; he heartily disliked, yet respected, Truscott, because he was the colonel's loyal and trusted staff-officer, and he was at all times as discourteous and fault-finding with his second lieutenant, Glenham, as he dared be at a post where the colonel was always ready to listen to any appeal for justice, either from officer or man; but Canker was weak withal, and, finding that Truscott would ask no questions or express no opinion as to his action in Glenham's case, he proceeded to do just what Truscott was morally certain he would do, defend it. "You see, Jack," said Canker, "I must have at least two subalterns here this week. I would be very glad to oblige Mr. Glenham by taking stables, recitations, and the like, but we must have four officers for officer-of-the-day duty. If anybody were here to take his place, I would be delighted to let him go." Truscott continued his calm occupation of conning over some company returns, and merely bowed in acquiescence, so Canker continued: "It is very disagreeable to me to have to interrupt so pleasant a programme, but you see yourself that we ought to have four officers for duty, do you not?"

"Undoubtedly," says Truscott, imperturbably. "We ought to have a dozen."

"I'm glad you agree with me," says Canker. "Mr. Glenham is prone to think me extremely exacting and capricious where he is concerned, and will be more apt to complain than ever."

"Doubtless he will be much disappointed," says Jack; "but he will see the real reason as quick as the rest of us, and, as he would not think of asking any one else to give way in his favor, he will take it as it is

meant." And the adjutant looks squarely at his superior as he says it.

Canker doesn't half like the ambiguity of the reply ; but after scrutinizing the features of his junior in a quick, furtive glance, he says, hurriedly,—

"Of course, certainly ; but if any of the subaltern officers who are going were to remain here in his stead, then I would be willing to let Glenham go. However, I suppose every man has set his heart on attending those balls, and there will be no chance of that."

"Every man, to my knowledge, *is* very eager to go," replies Jack, "but I presume I may say to Glenham that if some one of the lieutenants will stay and take his place, he can leave with the party at reveille."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," replies Canker. And with that and the conviction that nobody will make any such quixotic offer, he presently says "good-night," and goes off homeward.

His footsteps are no sooner out of hearing than Truscott rises and strolls out upon the piazza. The silence of night has fallen upon Camp Sandy. The bright stars are twinkling aloft through the rare, cloudless atmosphere. Here and there along the company quarters a gleam of light streams out through open doorway or window upon the parade, and some half-dozen of the men are droning a sentimental ditty in a style uncultivated, but apparently satisfactory to themselves. Far across the parade, along officers' row, the lights are more frequent, and an occasional burst of musical laughter, the soft tinkle of a guitar, and the deeper voices of some of the garrison beaux, floating on the still night-air, tell where the usual party has gath-

ered on some one of the broad piazzas for the evening's ration of gossip and small talk. Truscott sticks his hands deep in his pockets, and, fixing his eyes on the toe of his boot, gives himself to solitary reflection. Two or three of the greyhounds rise, stretch, yawn, then come up to their friend and poke their cool muzzles against his wrists, and mutely plead for recognition. He draws his hands from their ambush, and bestows a few absent-minded pats upon their sleek heads, emboldened by which, two of the lithe creatures place their paws upon his breast and strive to lick his face. "Down, Hualpai! down, Verde!" he protests, as he brushes them off; then seeing their crestfallen looks as they slink away, he whistles them back, whereupon they come, bounding, and Truscott laughs to himself, as he covers their heads and flanks with hearty slaps of endearment. "Good boy, Wally! good boy, Verde! *You'd miss me, at any rate. By Jove, I'll do it!*" Another minute and he stepped into the telegraph-office, took a couple of blanks from the desk, placed them in the ordinary brown envelope, closed it, then turned to the soldier operator,—

"Corcoran, several officers will breakfast in the mess-room at reveille to-morrow. Address this envelope to me, and bring it to me there at that time; do you understand?" and with that he left.

Long before the sun came peeping over the Mogollon range (locally known as the Mogeyone) on the following morning, and even as the mellow notes of the cavalry trumpets floated upward with the flag through the balmy air, hailing the dawn with stirring reveille, a busy group, horses, mules, and men, were preparing

for the start from officers' row. A large ambulance, with its frisky four-in-hand of sleek, well-fed mules, was loading up with baskets, satchels, and trunks in front of Captain Tanner's quarters, another, similarly supplied and occupied, stood at the Raymonds' door. In front of bachelor's hall were the favorite "mounts" of Truscott, Glenham, and Crane, and those of the two orderlies who were to accompany the party. The orderlies themselves were busily strapping on the saddle-bags and ponchos of their leaders; for while it rarely rained at Sandy, as has been said, it might pour in torrents before they reached the Agua Fria. In the mess-room three or four officers in riding dress were hastily sipping their coffee, when Glenham, feverishly impatient as all could see, rose hurriedly from the table, and bidding the others make haste, strode to the door, and there bumped up against the telegraph operator.

"For the adjutant," said the latter, saluting and answering the inquiry in the lieutenant's eye.

Truscott received the brown envelope without a word, slowly opened and drew forth the contents, which he glanced over with a slight uplifting of the eyebrow, and then silently rose and walked off towards his office.

"Now, what's up?" said Crane. "Two to one that means that a scout's to be sent out right away,—those cussed Tontos must be jumping the reservation again."

"If that were the matter the order would come to the 'C. O.,' not to the adjutant," said Glenham; "but we can't wait; it's time we were off. I'll hail Jack and see what's the matter." With that he called his orderly, who came up leading the lieutenant's horse.

Glenham quickly mounted, and cantered across the garrison after Truscott, overtaking him at the office.

The adjutant turned, and, without giving his friend time to question, held out his hand. "Glenham, you and Crane go ahead ; I can't leave now, but I'll follow as soon as it is possible for me to get away. Just tell the orderly to leave my saddle-bags at the house and take 'Apache' back to the stable. Off with you, old boy," as Glenham hesitated, "and good time to you ; I'm going right to the telegraph-office."

"One second, Jack : nothing serious, is it?"

"Nothing at all, Glenham ; go ahead."

The ambulances, with cracking whip and plunging mules, were rattling out of the north gate ; fluttering white handkerchiefs signalled "come on ;" Crane and his party were mounting ; the hounds, leaping, yelping, and excited, were rushing about the parade in anticipation of a chase up the valley. So with one uneasy, half-dissatisfied glance at his friend, Glenham suddenly struck spur to his horse, wheeled, and, with a wave of his hand, galloped off in pursuit. Truscott stopped at the door and gazed after the stout, bulky young knight, who "bobbed" clumsily in his saddle as he rode. A smile half amused, half sorrowful, stole over his face. "Poor Arthur, ten times three years in the riding hall couldn't have made him a horseman."

Three hours later the commanding officer *pro tem.* sat in state to receive the report of the officer of the day. The trumpets were "turning off" the old guard, and two tall subalterns entered girt with sabre and precise in dress. Acknowledging the salute of the first, and reaching out his hand to receive the guard report book,

Captain Canker looked up in amaze at the familiar face and form of the adjutant, who calmly raised hand to cap visor and remarked, "I report as new officer of the day, sir."

Canker reddened and stammered for a moment, then hurriedly stuttered, "You are not required to perform guard duty, sir. It is Mr. Glenham's turn. Where is he, sir?"

"Well on his way to Prescott, captain. You were so good as to say that he could go if any one of the subalterns would remain and take his duties. I do that, sir."

CHAPTER III.

PERCHED aloft in the very summit of a glorious mountain range, yet nestling in the shelter of pine-covered heights sweeping in circle around it, watered by the purest and coldest of running streams, and revelling in an atmosphere bracing and clear as only a Sierran atmosphere can be, the little town of Prescott and the outlying post of Fort Whipple owed to nature all their attractiveness. They were embowered in a veritable oasis, for, whether from east or west, north or south, miles of desert sand or sterile and volcanic rock had to be traversed before the eye of the traveller rested upon the glad sight of something like civilized homes. In the days of which we write San Francisco lay three weeks' journey away, and more than a month, unless one took a bumping trip to the railway by "buckboard," was occupied in the devious route to the Atlantic States. Rugged miners, savage Apaches, root-grubbing Digger Indians, swarthy Mexicans, and prowling coyotes were the inhabitants apparently indigenous to the soil, but to prey upon their necessities those pioneers of civilization, the shop-keeping Israelites, had established the inevitable "slop-shop," and those precursors of settlement, the scum and froth borne ever upon the outermost wave of the great tide of emigration, the bar- and gambling-hell-keepers, had planted

their vile booths around the plaza, and stood guard with self-cocking revolver over their stock in trade ere ever the outlines of that plaza were staked.

A governor in course of time had been duly expatriated to look after the interests of the United States in this hopelessly turbulent neighborhood, and for some years twice the realized revenue was spent in keeping up communication with his exiled excellency. Eventually, as a means of recruiting a population fast killing itself off, to the no great detriment of society in general, but the undoubted jeopardy of the commercial interests of those merchants who had shipped their goods thither in hopes of fabulous profit, a few lodes were duly "salted" by experienced hands of Californian education, the inflammatory announcement was made that Arizona was teeming with mineral wealth, and gold, silver, copper, and iron could be picked up by the bucketful. A swarm of eager adventurers pushed in to try their luck, and having invested their last shilling in the attempt, were compelled to stick there and swindle others into coming and doing likewise, and finally it was brought about that three regiments and a brigadier-general of the United States army had to be scattered broadcast over this barren land to whip into subjection the Apache hordes, who looked with not undeserved hatred upon the original white invaders, and one of these regiments was so composed of horses and men as to comply with the generally accepted requirements which in this country entitle it to the designation of cavalry.

Two years of sharp work and stubborn fighting in the mountains had won for the —th the peace they

were now enjoying, but had effected many important changes on their muster-rolls. Some of their best and bravest had been sacrificed in the thankless task, and bright hopes, buoyant, loyal, gallant hearts, lay buried under the worthless soil with no other honors than their comrades' parting volley, no other notice than the pithy explanation of the yearly register in its list of casualties, "Killed in affair with Indians," every bit as complimentary and gratifying to mourning widow or stricken parent as though it read "in pothouse brawl." What though the regiment could tell (when it chose to talk of those things) of deeds of heroism that rivalled the blazoned records of the great war or matched the later knightliness of Beresford at Ulundi? What though in hand-to-hand encounter young striplings from the Point had won their spurs or received their death-wound, and dying had, like Philip Sydney, spurned the cooling drink craved in their burning agony that an humbler comrade, needing it more than they who could but die, might drink and live? What though in the proud, yet untold record of their campaigns, thirst and starvation, bitter cold and scorching heat, lonely death in a distant land, the torture of carriage through miles of mountain wilderness that festering wounds might receive the care only to be looked for days' journey away, all were borne uncomplainingly, unflinchingly for duty's sake? What though not one defeat had marred the wreath of hard-won conquests, that never had officer or man like craven Cary turned his back upon wounded friend or advancing foe? What mattered it that their general, himself as reckless in exposure as their hardiest trooper, sought again and

again the recognition their deeds demanded? An all-powerful if not all-wise Congress had decreed that Indian warfare was not war in the sense that permitted any honor or reward to be extended to its participants. As a Western and consequently friendly Representative once put it, a man might sit in an easy-chair through four years of a great rebellion, and without ever hearing the whistle of a bullet be "brevetted" all the way up from captain to major-general, but let him get shot into smithereens in hand-to-hand struggle with the Indians of our mountains and prairies, why, that wasn't war said the Senate, and so the recommendations of the general and the nominations of the President went into the Congressional waste-basket, and except the copper-bronze medal worn by some few enlisted men,—an affair similar in appearance and presumably equal in intrinsic value to the old-fashioned cent,—the regiment had gone unrewarded.

But peaceful times seemed to have come. Band after band of hostile Apaches had surrendered and been gathered on the reservations. Scouting expeditions became infrequent, visits began to be exchanged between the detached posts, and at department headquarters balls and "hops" were of weekly occurrence. The arrival of ladies from the States brought about a revival in the latent interest in Eastern fashions, feminine conversations became less intelligible to masculine ears, and feminine garments as noted at the dancing-parties became scant as to skirt and entangling as to trains. Those heroines who had gone into Arizona with the —th had originally astonished the Mexican señoritas by the balloon-like expansions of dress-goods

worn just below the small of the back, alluded to as *paniers*, and maintained in position by "bustles." Now it seemed that a new order of things was to come into vogue, and Mrs. Wilkins, an exponent in fashions, whatever she might be in linguistics, had already won enviable distinction by appearing at Sandy in what she assured her friends to be the "very latest style of *pollinay*." The other ladies readily forgave the brief ascendancy thus acquired in consideration of the sly merriment occasioned by her unconscious slaughter of the proper name.

And so it happened that all was jollity in the Territory when Grace Pelham arrived at Prescott, and so it chanced that two nights after her arrival there were gathered from far and near, from Bowie, Lowell, Apache, and Grant, along the southern line of posts, from Yuma and Mohave, from all over Arizona little squads of officers and ladies, eager as children, after their long exile, to join in the festivities consequent upon the coming of her ladyship and the colonel's daughter.

The day of the staff ball had come. Every instant of Grace's waking hours had been occupied with receiving visits, driving, riding, and dining. The delegation from Sandy went *en masse*, as soon as the proper toilets could be effected after the rough and dusty drive, to pay its respects to madame and to loyally welcome the younger lady. Glenham, a radiant, intensified Glenham, was already there, and there the ladies and their lords left him when they retired to their temporary homes. "He's simply dead in love with her," said Mrs. Raymond to Mesdames Turner and Wilkins.

"Yes," said Mrs. Wilkins, "and her ladyship's dead in love with his money," and somehow or other Mrs. Pelham was duly informed of the remark before the setting of a second sun.

Glenham *was* dead in love with her. From morning till night he hung about the girl; he it was who secured the first ride, the only one before the ball; he who was accepted as her escort thereto; he who accompanied her to the croquet ground or band concert, who alone of the subalterns was invited to the general's house to sit by the side of the sweet, fair guest and dine with them *en famille*.

"It's a put-up job," said the slangy and sulky young fellows who were vainly striving to "cut in" and catch an unoccupied moment; but between them and the apparently unconscious object there ever interposed that placidly smiling, imperturbably watchful mother ("that confounded old tabby," said Ray of Camp Cameron). It was all plain sailing for Glenham, all rock, shoal, and sand-bar for them.

"But where's Truscott?" said Colonel Pelham, suddenly, the morning of the ball; and with a pang of self-reproach, Arthur Glenham for the first time remembered that his friend was left behind. "A telegram reached him just as we were starting," he explained, "and he said it would be impossible for him to start until later. He made us come on without him, but I surely thought he would be here last night."

"'Deed and you're wrong there, Mr. Glenham," broke in Mrs. Wilkins. "I can tell you the whole thing in a jiffy, colonel. With Captain Canker in com

mand there was no chance of little Glenham's getting away, and it's just my belief that Mr. Truscott stayed back in his place. Ah, Miss Gracie," she added, mischievously, "there's one young man that don't come to his knees even for you." After which graceful piece of *badinage* the lady confronted Lady Pelham, and the two dames squarely met one another's glance, the war began right there.

In the silence that followed Glenham stood like one in a maze, the colonel turned sharply on his heel and left the room. Ray and Captain Tanner nearly collided with him in the hall, and came in upon the group wondering what old Catnip was damning that man Canker for this time.

Half an hour later Captain Canker, seated in the adjutant's office at Camp Sandy, received a dispatch by telegraph in these words: "Department commander desires Lieutenant Truscott's presence to-night, unless services urgently needed." Canker ground his teeth, threw the paper to the adjutant, thrust his hands in his pockets, and strode to the door. There he turned and angrily spoke, "You can go, of course, but this is a damned piece of interference on somebody's part." Truscott glanced at the telegram and went on with his writing without a word.

Canker walked away half across the parade, then stopped, pondered a moment, and returned. "Mr. Truscott, I can't spare any more teams or men. If you go you must ride, and you cannot take your orderly. I don't intend to allow government horses to be ruined by fifty-mile gallops while I'm in command," and with that he was off.

Truscott looked at the clock, sent a few lines to his servant, finished his work, and, as the noonday sun beat hotly down, with Sandy far behind, he crossed the first range and rode rapidly over into the gorge of Cherry Creek—alone.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ball was at its height. The well-waxed floor, on which the post quartermaster had lavished his finest boarding, and enthusiastic bachelor officers hours of individual supervision and personal effort, shone like satin, and rendered all but those who were thoroughly experienced vaguely nervous and reluctant about joining in the most solemn of square dances. Around the walls, draped with flag and guidon, and glittering with sabre and scroll-work, were interspersed dozens of lamps with polished reflectors. Candles and kerosene furnished all the illumination that sun or moon withheld, despite official edicts against volatile and explosive oils. Crude and warlike as may have been the decorations, never did the "swellest" German at Delmonico's present much better music or any better dancing than was to be found at the large garrisons of the frontier, and certainly for genuine enjoyment an army ball yields the palm to no other. An army lady never becomes a wall-flower. She has this one compensation for marrying in the service. After two or three seasons in the great cities of the East even the prettiest girl becomes to society people *passée*, and, once married, only when exceptionally attractive and brilliant does she continue to be sought as a partner; but, owing probably to the dearth of young and un-

married ladies, the army wife retains all the hold she ever had upon bellehood, even increases it in many instances, and the bright and witty and dancing woman, though her children be tall as herself, never lacks for "attention." As for the army girl, with any vivacity, with any pretensions to beauty or grace, she lives and moves a queen.

And so the ball-room was filled with dancers; the sombre uniforms of the staff and the infantry, the gayer trappings of the cavalry, the aiguillettes of the aides-de-camp mingling with many an exquisite toilet that would have shone resplendent in the distant East. It was long after midnight, supper had been served, even the musicians, in detachments, had been fed and otherwise comforted, some few elders had slipped away and gone homeward, but the ringing music of "*Le Roi Carotte*" sent ten full "sets" through the figures of the Lancers, and compelled many a staid spectator to beat time with his feet. Many a group of lookers-on watched the spirited movement of the dance from corner and doorway, while out in the "club-room," where numbers of the senior officers and non-dancing civilians from Prescott had gathered for a smoke, many a time had beaming Colonel Pelham to touch glasses with friend or comrade who came to congratulate him on the arrival of madame, and to say, with serio-comic earnestness, "By Jove, Pelham, if I were twenty years younger there would be another victim on Gracie's list."

Well might they do her homage. Confessedly pretty before, Grace Pelham was simply lovely, radiant, to-night. Taller perhaps than many girls of her age,

yet not above the average height, with a form slender, willowy, and graceful, there was a queenliness in her bearing that distinguished her even in her girlhood. Perhaps this was due to the carriage of her royal head, for that was Gracie's glory. Small and shapely, it was crowned with a wealth of soft shining hair, the richest hue of golden brown, shot with radiant lights and tints of reddish bronze. Who could tell its color? "Red, of course," said Mrs. Wilkins at first sight. "Chestnut sorrel," said Captain Turner, who loved the color as that of the mount of his company. "Golden bronze," said Ray of Camp Cameron; and the "bonniest brown in the world," said a poetical aide-de-camp. All about her pure white forehead and temples it clustered in shimmering little curls, each with a halo of its own. Thence, brushed smoothly back, it was gathered in one massive knot, mantling, yet disclosing the perfect shape of the head it graced.

"A thing to be braided and jewelled and kissed,
'Twas the loveliest hair in the world, my pet,"

was poor Glenham's constant thought of it, and all too soon that of more than one other.

But Grace's glories ended not here. The dark eyebrows which spanned her forehead were full, boldly marked, yet but slightly curved, and underneath the brows, curtained with lids of purest white, shaded and fringed with lashes long, thick, and curling, were eyes so large, so soft, yet so ready to flash with merriment or sparkle with animation, that to look into their dark depths was enough to make more than one young fel-

low long to see them melt with tenderness. Like her hair, Grace Pelham's eyes were indescribable in color, for they too were shot with odd little gleams of golden light. "Yellow, you know; real like cats," said Mrs. Wilkins, and yet those eyes were lovely. Lovely in the frank, fearless innocence of their gaze; lovely in the truth and purity of soul that shone through every glance; lovely in the thought and earnestness of their expression; lovely despite the dash of yellow in their hazel brown; lovely enough to be declared her very best feature, unless the sweet soft mouth were excepted. Once before in his lifetime the narrator had seen such eyes as Grace Pelham's, but not once a mouth like hers. Closed, it was the perfection of Cupid's bow, so unerringly had nature stamped thereon the utmost grace of curve and line. Even the point in the short upper lip was as exact as though modelled from the marble of Praxiteles. Around the corners were clustered such shy little curves and ripples that—that looking was longing; and when Gracie smiled, white, even teeth flashed through their roseate frame-work. Her mouth was always an attractive feature, but simply exquisite in repose. *Du reste?*—a fair oval face, a straight, "thorough-bred" nose, a delicately modelled chin with its faint suspicion of lurking dimple, a throat and neck white and soft and spotless, and hands and feet long, slender, the former at least fragile-looking and softly white. "Too thin and scrawny to my taste," said Mrs. Wilkins, redundant in person as she was in criticism. "The sweetest girl in the army, Nellie Blossom not excepted," said Lieutenant Ray, as he gazed at her through the canopied entrance to the ball-room, and

then sighing profoundly as he contemplated the mortgaged condition of his pay accounts, turned back into the club-room.

Not a vacancy was there on Grace's card that night, and though she showed no favor, kept no waltz or galop for one who might prove a better partner than another, she had engagements for every number from first to last before she had been half an hour in the ball-room. Glenham as her escort had seized upon the card, and, with boyish selfishness, scribbled his initials in five different places. Later in the night, finding new applicants for her hand who protested against being compelled to go home without one dance with the belle of the evening, she had laughingly summoned her cavalier and notified him that he must yield at least two of his claims in favor of the unprovided-for applicants, a thing that young Arthur most grudgingly acceded to.

Waltz, lancers, quadrille, and galop succeeded one another in rapid succession as the night wore on, and still even matrons and "chaperons" danced untiringly; still some new sweet strain from Paolo's orchestra would call the half-wearied ones again to the glassy floor. There was marked diminution among the spectators at the windows where, earlier in the evening, dozens of the soldiers and the soldiers' wives had gathered to feast their eyes upon the scene within. There was hardly an elderly man among the dancers, yet the sets continued full, and the spirit and movement untiring.

It must have been late in the morning, past three o'clock, when, after a genuine romp through the merry figures of the army quadrille, the dancers hurried out

in couples to the club-rooms for a breath of fresh air and a sip of punch or lemonade, as tastes might demand. Among them strolled Grace with her partner, an aide-de-camp on the staff of the commanding general, and with him she stopped one moment at a table where Colonel Pelham, with three or four oldsters, was deep in a game of whist. The colonel looked fondly up into her sweet flushed happy face, and taking the hand she had rested lightly on his shoulder, pressed it to his cheek, as he inquired,—

“Having a good time, daughter? Any of these boys dance any better than your father could fifteen years ago?” Whereat everybody laughed. “Fact,” he continued; “I wouldn’t mind trying a tilt with the majority of them now, except Ray or Truscott. How does Truscott dance, Gracie?”

“I haven’t met him, father. Is he here to-night?”

“Here!” exclaimed the colonel. “Why! *isn’t he?* General,” he cried, turning suddenly to another table, where, all alone, sat the chief, absorbed, as was his wont, in a game of solitaire. “General, hasn’t Truscott reported? I declare I had forgotten.”

“Not to me,” said the chief, looking up with an expression of evident anxiety. “Where’s Wickham?” A soldierly, black-haired, black-bearded officer stepped quickly to him. “Wickham, didn’t you get reply to the dispatch to Sandy about Mr. Truscott?”

“Yes, general. Truscott left the post before ten this morning.”

Grace noticed a sudden twitch of the arm of the aide-de-camp on which her hand was resting. Looking quickly up, she saw him biting at the heavy moustache

which shaded his mouth, though his sharp, eager eyes were fixed upon the general's face.

"I don't understand it," said Pelham, gravely. "It's a long, rough, fifty-mile ride, but Truscott has often made it in ten hours."

"Pardon me, Miss Pelham," quietly spoke the aide-de-camp. "There goes the waltz you promised Evans, and he will be tearing things to pieces in his efforts to find you if we don't get back to the ball-room." And with that he led her quickly away, talking laughingly, but in three minutes he was back beside his chief, and a hurried conversation took place in a low tone.

"No, gentlemen," Colonel Pelham was saying, in answer to a suggestion from the card-table, "it's no case of a lost shoe or a lame horse. Truscott never was known to lame a horse or to start with a loose shoe. Something has gone wrong, or he would have been here before ten o'clock, and now it's half-past three." Another minute, and after some muttered words with the general, Wickham and the aide-de-camp silently slipped out of the room.

Even the Pelham ball (as it was long afterwards termed among the participants) had to come to an end some time. Yet it was after four o'clock when the last waltz found still a dozen enthusiastic dancers gliding about the room, and the performer on the double-bass, falling asleep to the droning accompaniment of his own music, was aroused by a kick to the consciousness that his comrades were playing "Home, Sweet Home," while he was still sawing away at his part of "Künstler Leben." From first to last it had been one glowing triumph for Grace, and her ladyship had listened with

pardonable and parental pride to many a tribute to her daughter's beauty, her winning ways, and unaffected manner. Now, as fleecy wraps were being donned previous to venturing forth into the sharp morning air, Mrs. Pelham stood at the door of the dressing-room exchanging last good-nights with those who had lingered to the end. Of these were our Camp Sandy party, one and all indefatigable dancers, except Lieutenant Wilkins who had long since been snoring with his head on his arms in a sheltered corner of the card-room; but even the asperity of his better-half had melted under the genial influences of such music, such partners, and such punch, and for once she had spared him public reprimand; but the sight of her ladyship, smiling, portly, and majestic, showering confidential salutations upon her intimates and condescension upon the juniors, was, as she happily expressed it, "the red rag for my bull," and once more the matrons met with a clash, and one incident occurred to mar the equanimity with which Mrs. Pelham had witnessed her daughter's triumph. It had required no keenness of perception throughout the evening to note how thoroughly she had kept Grace and her partners under view; how eagerly she watched the devotion of Glenham; how frowningly the attentions of such ineligible as Ray, Evans, Hunter, and the like had been regarded; for poor as those youngsters might have been in pocket, in point of personal attractions poor Glenham had little to offer in competition with them.

"Ah, Mrs. Pelham," said Mrs. Wilkins, halting in front of the colonel's wife, "Miss Gracie has won all hearts to-night. I predict it won't be long before we

have a grand wedding at this rate. Sure all the young fellows will be cutting one another's throats if she isn't married inside of the year."

Amazed at the effrontery of her manner, as well as stung by its fearlessness, Mrs. Pelham's portly bosom swelled with wrath, and the color surged to her forehead. In the desperately hopeless effort of crushing her foe with an overwhelming hauteur, she replied,—

"It is to be hoped, Mrs. Wilkins, that *my* daughter will have too much character to rush into any such matrimonial gulf as you suggest. She will be guided by her parents, not by freak or fancy, and need be in no hurry."

"'Deed and you're right, Mrs. Pelham; she'll never be in a hurry so long as only such brainless boys as Glenham are allowed to approach her. But wait till men like Truscott step in. It's her father's own daughter she'll be then, or I'm mistaken." And a sarcastic laugh was the only rejoinder her ladyship had time to make before Glenham and Grace appeared at her side; but wrath was in her heart and vengeance plotting in her brain as she turned to her escort.

It was so new to her to be braved and badgered this way by a woman vastly her inferior in social station; the wife of an officer, to be sure, but that officer but an old lieutenant of her husband's regiment, a man who, having rendered his country good service during the war of the Rebellion, had thankfully accepted a second lieutenancy in the regular cavalry at its close. He and his sharp-sighted, razor-tongued wife had "joined" together in '67, and long association among ladies of refinement and culture had only slightly

dulled the edges of her uncouthness ; but she was a prudent, saving, and thrifty woman in her household ; had been a far more valuable helpmeet to patient, plodding Wilkins than he knew, and, except when indulging in a fit of ill temper and consequent explosiveness of language, she kept his home in reasonable comfort and his children in excellent dress and discipline. Policy she had, and cared to have, none. She had some warm impulses ; was a faithful friend in time of trouble or illness ; had been a devoted nurse to young Gregg when he was down with the mountain fever, and to Plympton when he was slowly recovering from the wounds the pestilent Apaches had inflicted in the last fight he and her husband had had with them ; but the moment another woman attempted to override or ignore her there rose in her bosom a spirit of resentment that overswept all bounds. She had neither education nor polish, but a faculty of saying just what she thought, and more too, and, to use her husband's rueful admission, "She wasn't afraid of the devil."

Still swelling with suppressed wrath was the colonel's wife when Lieutenant Ray, with his cavalry circular ("cape" as they called it) thrown over his arm, re-entered and hastily approached her. Well he knew that madame had more than once that night looked askance at his attentions to Grace ; possibly, too, he realized the importance of seizing upon the opportunity while it served, for his manner was deferential and courteous in the extreme as he bowed before her ladyship. "Colonel Pelham has been called off with the general, madame. I cannot imagine what is going on, but may I not have the honor of escorting you home?"

Now, here was a young man who properly appreciated her position, or his own inferiority, no matter which. So lately dared by one of her own sex, her ladyship's ruffled feathers were smoothed by the tone of deference with which the diplomatic Ray made tender of his services. Her flushed features unbent in a smile of patronizing (matronizing?) consent, and, with a sweeping and comprehensive good-night bow to the throng, she accepted the subaltern's arm and majestically left the hall.

Gracie lingered, with Glenham flitting impatiently about her. There were so many good-nights to be said, so many repetitions of "Just the loveliest ball ever known," so many projects for rides or drives and dances when they had had time to get over this one, though there was not a belle present who did not profess her entire ability to start right on and begin all over again, but at last the group broke away, and in a few moments Arthur Glenham was leading his sweet partner up the winding path towards the general's house, and not a soul was within earshot.

Brilliantly the stars were gleaming in the rare purity of the Sierran atmosphere. Cold and calm and glittering they shone down upon the dark pine-crested heights, and upon the dim valley in which sleeping town and outlying cantonment lay nestled. High aloft the studded girdle of Orion hung resplendent in the zenith, while farther west, from the lowering front of the great Bull, Aldebaran, radiant in his isolation, shone sparkling through the silent skies. Eastward, fringing the tumbling, ragged outline of the hills, a grayish pal-lor overspread the firmament, but left in deeper shade

all objects at their base. Here and there along the spur of foot-hill glimmering lights betrayed the homes of the officers, and lower down, midway across the valley, a broad yellow glare shot athwart the high road from the doors of the post-trader's, opened at that late hour presumably for the benefit of the drivers and hangers-on who had conveyed the guests from Prescott, but probably more to the benefit of the trader himself, for Arizona whiskey is of the vile vilest. The last wagon-load had rolled away towards town, the beat of hoof and rumble of wheel dying in the distance full ten minutes ago, and still those enticing doors stood open, evidence of further patronage, yet no sound came from the usually noisy bar- or card-room. All was so still that the cry of the sentinel's "Half-past four o'clock and a-a-all's well" rang through the frosty air like notes of clarion.

Along the opposite ridge the dim night-lights at the hospital had given place to some unwonted illumination. Glenham and his companion strolling slowly up the path must have marked it, had she known how unusual a feature these lights were at Whipple, had he marked anything but the beauty of the sweet face that enchained his eyes. For a moment they paused midway up the steep and looked back towards the now deserted ball-room "whose lights were fled." It lay in a little valley midway between them and a line of low one-storied buildings on the rise beyond. Oh, Glenham, where were your eyes that you noted not the lights moving rapidly to and fro among them, the offices of the adjutant-general and aides and the telegraph station? Where were your eyes that you saw not, still farther beyond,

the line of windows in the cavalry quarters, or, down in the valley of the stream itself, the flitting lanterns in the stables and corral? Poor boy! he saw nothing, thought of nothing but the face and form beside him, the glorious eyes that had haunted his dreams for two long years. The pair had stopped one brief moment to look around at the scene they had so lately left, and she, noting how he had no eyes for aught but her, marking with woman's quick intuition the silence that had taken possession of him, dreading the avowal she knew must be trembling on his lips, strove to move on again, and broke nervously into speech, but he resisted the gentle effort, and looking up she met his gaze. With an intensity of longing she had never dreamed of seeing Glenham's blue eyes were fastened passionately upon her face, drinking in her beauty. With a quick, impulsive movement he seized the slender hand that had lain upon his arm, and eagerly, brokenly, almost sobbingly, the words burst from his lips,—

“Grace! Gracie! I can wait no longer. You know I love you; you *must* know it. Haven't you one word of hope for me after all this long time?”

No time to hesitate now, no backward look or step, the plunge was taken; the words that, come what might, could never be forgotten, were spoken irrevocably. All along she had known they must be said, though in many a gentle way she had striven to give him to understand how hopeless it was, and now she must meet the words and, all too late, turn them back. Looking quickly into his quivering face, yet making no effort to disengage the hand he clasped so tightly as

almost to crush, her answer came like a cry of pain, "Oh, Mr. Glenham! I have tried so hard to avert this. I had hoped, almost prayed, you had forgotten what—what you told me at West Point."

For a moment no further word was spoken. She could hear the heavy beating of his heart, the gasping sob that rose to his lips, as, in dumb misery, his head fell upon his breast.

"If it had been a thing I could write of, I would have tried even harder to explain to you why it could never be," she presently went on gently, almost caressingly, her tone was so full of sympathy and sorrow. "You remember, don't you, that I told you two years ago, when you first spoke of—of this, that, though I did like you, it could only be like?"

Mutely he bowed his head, then releasing her hands he clasped his own, and leaned drearily against the little tree that stood beside the path. Then once again his head drooped upon his breast, and, with sudden movement, he covered his face with his hands, and next great sobs shook his young frame. Distressed beyond measure, alarmed at his violent grief, Grace knew not what to do. The tears were streaming from her own eyes as she stretched forth her hands, and, clasping his wrist, strove to turn him towards her. "It breaks my heart to see you suffer so, and yet I have no words to comfort you. Oh, Arthur, I never deserved such. I never thought it possible. Why *did* you not believe me when I told you then? Surely, I have not let you cherish this feeling for me."

Almost roughly he shook her hand away, and started up. "I'm not reproaching you," he said. "You could

not crush it out if you had tried ten times as hard ; but Grace, Grace, I could not help hoping. You were so young then ; your mother—— No ! I couldn't have crushed it even if she had not——”

“She ! my mother !” broke in Grace. “How do you mean, Mr. Glenham ? Mother could never have induced you to believe other than what I told you.”

But Glenham had no time to reply ; a quick, springy step was heard approaching. In the dim light a soldierly form came swinging into the path, and, catching sight of the white “burnouse” which enveloped Grace's throat and head, Lieutenant Ray stopped and held out his hand.

“Just in the nick of time, Miss Pelham. I'm off to join my troop fast as horse can take me. That you, Glenham ? We'll probably meet again then. All you Sandy fellows are ordered out. The Tontos have jumped the reservation. Good-by, Miss Pelham. If you miss the tassel of your fan to-morrow don't think you lost it, I stole it an hour ago.” And with that he bounded down the path.

Even as he disappeared a ringing trumpet-call pealed stirringly through the air the well-known signal, “Boots and Saddles !” and Glenham started from his attitude of utter despondency with an exclamation of almost fierce delight : “Thank God for that,—for anything of the sort !” And, dashing his hand across his eyes, the boy turned hastily up the path, leading his startled companion by the hand.

“Tell me what it means, Mr. Glenham,” she said, as soon as she could recover breath.

“More fighting and scouting, I suppose. I hadn't

hoped for anything half so good," he added, biting savagely at his lip.

Two horses, held by an orderly, stood in front of the general's quarters, and the door opening suddenly gave exit to the aide-de-camp who had been one of Grace's devotees during the night. Springing down the steps, he swung into the saddle before he heard Glenham's hail.

"You'll find Turner and Raymond over at Wickham's office," was all he had time to say. "They've got the orders for Sandy," he called back as he disappeared, followed by his orderly.

"Then it's good-by, Grace," said Glenham, slowly, as they ascended the steps. His voice was harsh and constrained, stern and harsh it sounded to her, but he was struggling against his deep emotion now, and the soldier in him rebelled at the betrayal of weakness.

On the porch he stopped, still not looking in her face: "I don't know when we'll meet again. I did not mean to risk and lose all so soon, but—but I was a fool, I suppose. You let Ray have that tassel, give me this glove. It isn't much to ask now."

It was Grace's turn to be wellnigh weeping. Despite her efforts the great tears were coursing down her cheeks, and she could not trust her voice to utter a word. The sight of his suffering, the utter dejection of his tone and mien, were too much for her nature, always sympathetic, always gentle.

"Just one word, Grace," he said, as he suddenly turned and seized her hands. "You say I must not hope. I'm going now without another plea. Tell me the truth, is there any man for whom you do care?"

And her eyes, tear-dimmed, yet sweet and truthful, looked fearlessly up in his face. "No, Mr. Glenham, no." He bent low over her hand, pressed it to his lips, and turned suddenly away. "No," she cried, "no one whom I even like as I do you." He would have turned once again to her, but the door opened suddenly, a broad light streamed out upon the porch, and Grace Pelham, her face flushed and wellnigh bathed in tears, confronted Jack Truscott.

CHAPTER V.

TWENTY miles up the valley above Camp Sandy lay the agency of the Indian reservation, and for some time previous to the date on which our story opens a young cavalry officer of large experience among the Apaches had been doing the double duty of commanding the Indian scouts and acting as agent for the six or seven thousand aborigines then being fed and clothed at the expense of the government. Of course, there had been, previous to his time, an actual (*bond fide* was almost written) Indian agent, one of the factors of that mysterious and complicated piece of cabinet-ware known as the Bureau, but, though this was before the halcyon days of Schurz, even the Department of the Interior could not close its eyes to the convincing proofs of the speculations which he had been so injudicious as to strive to keep entirely to himself, and so, having proved a doubly unprofitable servant, the Bureau was not unwilling to cast him out, whereupon he showed signs of insanity, was placed under medical care, and escorted back to his home in Massachusetts under the guidance and at the expense of Uncle Sam, the method of his madness subsequently manifesting itself in the realization that had he been discharged on the spot he would have been compelled to pay his own way. Then there was an interregnum. Even Indian agents could hardly

afford the trip to Eastern Arizona, the journey to San Francisco and thence by sea or desert to the Colorado, and thence by "buckboard" to the mountains, costing more for self and family than one could possibly hope to save in a year without getting found out. "If it were not for those d—d army officers," said one of these shrewd financiers, "a man might live like a gentleman even in Arizona." But the commanding general had for years of his life been dealing with Indians, and his maxim was to fight like blazes when fighting had to be done, teach them to dread the power of the Great Father, but to promise and insure fair treatment when they surrendered. The general had promised these Apaches fair treatment, and was bound to see his promise carried into effect. This led to his keeping an eye on the agents, and that led to the agents hating him worse than one of their own inspectors, which, after all, is a mild way of putting it. Nearly all the Arizona agents about this time were doctors of something or other, and bore the title if for proficiency in no other art, science, or profession than that of "doctoring" returns, and when this particular doctor was taken crazy and home (where he took to lecturing on the wrongs of the red man, and to himself the contributions of the charitable), the general was empowered to name a *pro tempore* agent, and sent Lieutenant Stryker of the —th. Stryker was well known to all the Apaches as a fearless young chief who had thrashed them many a time, and the one thing an Indian respects is bravery when combined with force. As a consequence there was peace and propriety on the reservation. Stryker kept rigid account of the warriors

under his control ; there was little or no straying away from the limits, the few settlers began to take courage and let out their stock to graze, new "ranches" began to spring up in the deep valleys, and all promised well until the arrival of another "ringster" from the East relieved Stryker of his duties, and the Indians of restraint. Still there had been no outbreak ; the road between Prescott and the valley of the Sandy, though lying dangerously near the Apaches, was considered so safe that the mail-carrier rode to and fro without escort, and small hunting-parties scoured through the mountains without meeting a "hostile" ; but for some weeks past unpleasant rumors had been in circulation, and for three or four days the agent had been sending down to Sandy sullen-looking specimens of the tribe, with the request that they be confined in the guard-house, among the murderers and worst characters of their brethren lodged therein. The guard reported that they were holding frequent pow-wows in the prison room, and that when out at work under the sentinels, occasional attempts had been made by them to steal knives, scrap-iron, and any odds and ends of metal that could be sharpened and used. Stryker had been sent to the southern part of the Territory, and none of the officers at Sandy knew anything of the new agent. The surgeon at the reservation, however, had twice been down to the post, and on both occasions had displayed keen anxiety as to the condition of affairs. He even asked Colonel Pelham to come up and take a look at things, saying that at the rate he was going on the agent would precipitate a mutiny in less than a fortnight,—he was arresting and ordering into confine-

ment some of the best and most influential Indians on no pretext whatever, and what was worse, said the doctor, "he is making them believe it is by your order or that of the general." Pelham had decided to lay the whole matter before the department commander in a written communication,—but the result was as yet unknown, as the general could not interfere with the proceedings of an officer of the Interior Department, and could only "forward" the statement with a strong indorsement, in which case it generally resulted in being pigeon-holed among the musty files of the Bureau, and the informant was the only one who got into trouble.

And so it happened that the solitary ride on which Jack Truscott had set forth proved an eventful one. Along towards two o'clock in the afternoon he had stopped to water his horse at a little spring well over towards the valley of the Agua Fria, loosening the girths and easing the saddle a while to rest his pet "Apache." The horse was a noble specimen of his race, tall, sinewy, almost gaunt in build, but with powerful limbs, an eye full of fire and intelligence, and the tapering, sensitive ears of the purest breed. Truscott stood with his left arm thrown negligently over the withers, stroking the glossy mane, and softly patting the sturdy neck of his friend, all the while talking caressingly to him, while "Apache," having indulged in a dozen long-drawn swallows, was now, with uplifted head and dripping muzzle, taking a leisurely survey of the scene preparatory to another dip. Satisfied apparently with the tranquillity of his surroundings, he was about to return to the sparkling water at his feet, when the leaves were stirred by a faint, rustling breeze,

and suddenly he threw up his head and with dilated eye and nostril gazed fixedly into the thicket near him. Next he gave a start, snorted as though alarmed, and sprang back towards the road. Truscott's quick hand was on the rein in an instant, while with his right he as quickly unslung the Henry rifle, that swung, Arizona fashion, athwart the pommel, still speaking gently, soothingly to his horse. "Steady, boy! steady, old man! you don't scare as a rule; what do you see, sir?" and with his rifle at ready the adjutant backed slowly from the thicket, stepped to the near side of his horse, and then deftly reset and "cinched" his saddle. Still "Apache" quivered with strong excitement, and Truscott, keeping his eyes fixed on the quarter from which his alarm seemed to come, led back to the road; there he stopped to consider. "Apache" still stamped and snorted, a thing he had never been known to do under ordinary circumstances, and his conduct was a puzzle. He had seen, smelled, and chased bears without special emotion before, and no other beasts of prey were to be found around Sandy,—rattlesnakes were plenty, but not a whit did "Apache" mind them, but the one thing he hated was an Indian. Could it be that Indians were crouching in the tangled brushwood back of the spring?

Truscott slung the reins over a stumpy little cedar, cocked his rifle, and, bending low, stepped over the brook and, parting the interlacing branches, forced his way through the bushes. Something wet and slimy on his hand caused him to raise it to the light, and he found it stained with blood. Close examination showed fresh gouts of blood on the leaves and twigs on either side,

then came a little patch of sunlight, a mere break in the thick tangle of shrubbery, and there, stripped, gashed, mutilated,—two arrows still sticking out from the brawny back showing the shots were from the rear,—lay the corpse of Finnegan, the mail-carrier; horse and equipments, arms, ammunition, clothing, and boots, all but the ghastly life-ridden frame, gone. Further search revealed the soldier's blouse and shirt, so hacked with knives and stained with gore as to be useless even to an Indian, while among a pile of rocks were scattered the letters and papers of the mail for Sandy. Five minutes more and Jack Truscott was speeding down into the valley to the west, sparing neither spur nor word, and "Apache," nerved to excitement, was making the best time known to Arizona records.

The winding, rocky road lay for a distance under hanging cliffs and boulders, and Truscott, bending low over the pommel with his Henry advanced on the right, peered warily ahead at every turn. A few miles farther, down in the open valley, lay a ranch where travellers and teamsters were accustomed to rest and refresh themselves and their cattle. The next turn would bring him in view of the valley and the ranch itself, and with keen anxiety he gazed as "Apache" bounded over the road. Another moment and the bend was reached, the valley lay before him, and plainer than ever before there stood the ranch, a glare of flame, while a thick cloud of smoke, black and heavy, floated slowly into the air. Never drawing rein he darted ahead; he knew that a party of cavalymen from the post were out repairing on the line of the military telegraph, that they were on the western side of the range

and could not fail to see the conflagration down in the valley; he knew that a few strides more would bring him to the point where the road and the telegraph line lay side by side, for the latter had been strung across country by the most direct route, and between the Agua Fria and the Sandy ran far south of the winding highway. The sergeant in charge of the party was an Irishman who bore an enviable name for bravery and efficiency in Apache warfare, and Truscott felt sure that he and his men would not be far away when there was need of his services. "Two to one the sergeant has seen that fire long before this, and he and his men are well on their way," was his reflection as he galloped on.

He was among the foot-hills of the western slope now; the road dipped and twisted among the spurs, sometimes in plain view two miles ahead, sometimes not a dozen yards. At a sharp bend "Apache" suddenly swerved violently to the left, and Truscott reined up alongside the smouldering remains of a wagon, near which, gashed and hacked with savage fury, lay the body of a Mexican teamster. The cattle had disappeared, driven off to the northward as the trail indicated, but examining the ground, Truscott saw to his joy the fresh imprint of a score of horse-shoes, crossing the road from the south, evidently in pursuit. Once more "Apache" felt the spur and darted west along the road,—once more his rider came into view of the ranch, and saw with satisfaction that while the sheds and "corral" were a mass of flames, the home of the station-keeper was still safe. The one thing now was to find the sergeant and his men and hie to the rescue. Truscott lost no time by following the trail; he knew well

that before this the flames had been seen, and the troopers were taking the shortest line across country towards the point of danger, if, indeed, they were not already there. Five minutes more and now a gently-sloping stretch of road, only a mile or so, lay between him and the ranch, and then—hurrah! off to the right he saw a little squad of blue jackets bounding over the slopes with carbines advanced, and Jack's voice rang out through the still air, "This way, this way, sergeant; make for the road!" and never drawing rein, he spurred ahead. Now he could hear the crackling of the flames, and every now and then the report of a rifle. Another moment, and scurrying off towards the reservation he caught sight of a party of some twenty Indians, running for dear life, throwing away the plunder they had picked up, clinging to the tails and manes of the few horses their luckier comrades had secured; away they were going, caught in the very height of their devilment, no time to palaver or parley, their hands still stained with rapine and murder,—the cowardly curs had suddenly caught sight of the little band of rescuers, and their first impulse was flight. Truscott turned in his saddle, waving his broad-brimmed hat to the men spurring along behind him, "Head 'em off, men; spread out to the right!" and in another instant "Apache's" hoofs thundered through the burning corral, past the scorching ranch, whose beleaguered occupants found time to cheer with delight as they dropped their rifles to rush for buckets and water, out through the open court beyond, splash through the rivulet, scramble up the bank on the other side, and Truscott was in full view of the chase. But horses were wellnigh

exhausted now, and eager though the riders might be, it was pitiful to hear the gasp and groan with which the steeds made answer to the spur. The mounted Indians were plainly seen striking at their comrades, who, clinging to their mounts, impeded their flight, and some of the troopers, trusting to luck, had opened a long-range fire at the pursued. But "Apache" kept on, fire, mettle, endurance, and speed, all were combined in his glorious race, and almost before he realized it Truscott found himself closing in upon the stragglers.

Throwing away the arms they dared not stop to use, two Indians flung themselves flat upon their faces on the sward ; but another, wheeling quickly, knelt, aimed. Truscott bent low upon his horse's neck, and the harmless flash of the savage's rifle was answered by a surer shot that sent a bullet crashing through the tawny, naked breast. Then there came another report, sharp and ringing, close at hand, and with it poor "Apache" wavered, staggered, plunged headlong to his knees and rolled in agony upon the turf. Truscott alighted, cat-like, on his feet, but quickly knelt to avoid the hurried missiles sent back at him by the scattering foe. He ground his teeth in bitter rage as he saw his favorite lying there in his death-struggle, and with vengeful eye drove shot after shot at his slayers, and not till the sergeant and his men could reach him did he know or realize that the blood was streaming down his left arm, and that an arrow had torn a deep rent under the shoulder-strap.

There was no further pursuit : horses were exhausted, and few white men afoot can catch an Apache ; but four of the tribe had paid the forfeit of their crimes

and lay weltering along the trail. Slowly the victors returned to the ranch, where the owner, a sturdy Norwegian, and his good wife, with eager volubility, poured forth their thanks for the timely rescue, and brought water and bandages for Truscott's shoulder. One or two bucolical-looking Swedes were still dashing water against the adobe walls, as though the now smouldering ruins of the corral-sheds could communicate flame to dried mud, while in one of the rooms two teamsters, badly wounded but worse scared, were stretched upon the floor groaning lustily in their distress. Close by the corral lay two more Tonto "bucks," who had presumed too much upon the easy victory over single and unprepared victims, and had ventured with reckless confidence in their overwhelming force to attempt a rush upon the stout-hearted ranchmen. Olson hurriedly told the story of the raid as known to him: how, long before noon, a small party had strolled in to beg for something to eat, and were noticed peering about at the interior of the ranch; how his wife had snatched away a rifle one of them had taken and was eagerly examining; how, later in the day, a trapper rode by from the east, saying he had seen numbers of 'Patchie tracks among the hills and didn't like the looks of things; and finally, how, after two o'clock, the two teamsters had come tearing in on one horse saying that the Indians had attacked them in the cañon among the foot-hills, and they had to flee for their lives, then came the Indians themselves. He "thought there must have been a hundred of them," some dressed in soldier clothes, some on horseback, and he and his people had run for the house, which they placed in as defensible a

state as they knew how, and fought them back like heroes, according to the good man's story, though, from the fact that few of the Apaches had fire-arms, and only two of them breech-loaders (which they had secured at the expense of poor Finnegan and the Mexican that morning) and that the household was still quivering with excitement, Truscott concluded that their relief at his appearance was the most genuine portion of the entire exhibit. The Apaches had not made a very determined assault, and the besieged would hardly have held out against one.

It was not probable that another attack would be made that afternoon. The sun was well down towards the west by this time, and Truscott decided, as soon as he could rest his weary horses, to push in to Prescott with the news. A wagon was filled with straw, in which the wounded teamsters were carefully laid. Two of the cavalry horses, refreshed by a two hours' halt and a hearty feed, were harnessed in, and, leaving the sergeant with two men at the ranch as guard, the adjutant and a little party of three "effectives" set forth at sundown with the wagon-load of wounded.

The road was rough, the night, though still and starlit, was dark in the deep pine forests through which they rode after leaving the Agua Fria. Off to the northeast the signal-fires of the Indians told the story of the outbreak, and the highway was deserted. It was near three o'clock in the morning before Truscott reached the post, turned over his wounded to the care of the hospital steward, and went to headquarters to make his report. The ball was still in progress, and the strains of gay music fell upon his ear as he climbed

the slope towards the offices. Lights were burning in the telegraph-room, however, and here he found the operator clicking away at his instrument. "My God! lieutenant," said he, springing up; "we've been mighty anxious about you. The Apaches have raided the valley,—just got the news from Sandy half an hour ago, and particulars are coming in every minute. Hold on one second until I tell Sandy you are here."

Stiff, chilled, and tired, smarting with pain from his torn shoulder, Truscott sank into a chair; his thoughts drifted back over the events of the day, but lingered with keen, and even bitter sorrow on "Apache's" death. For three long years he had been Truscott's one pet, his pride and delight. He had borne his rider gallantly that day over hill and dale, rock and rill, a wild rush to the rescue; he had distanced all competitors; was the only horse "in at the death," thought poor Jack, and as he recalled that mute appeal in the glazing eyes of his favorite, and recalled too that not once before death put an end to his misery had there been a chance for a single caress or word, not one sign to his faithful charger of the love in which he held him, Jack's pale, set face grew paler, there was an odd quiver about the stern lines of his mouth, and a gathering film in the tired eyes he so hastily covered with his hand. Quick steps came bounding up the pathway, across the narrow piazza, and Colonel Wickham entered with the aide-de-camp. "Well, what's the latest? Have they heard from Truscott?" was his immediate question.

The operator motioned towards the sitting figure with one hand, while the right kept busily clicking its message, and Truscott, rising, stood before the questioner,

who eagerly grasped his hands. "Safe, Jack, thank God!—but you're hurt! Where did you run across them? D—n it, what a time to ask questions! We've had an awful scare about you. Sit down again, man. Here, Bright, run down to the club-room and bring me some whiskey." The aide was off without a word, and by the time he returned with the required stimulant Wickham, who never used it himself, but knew when it was needed for others, had told Truscott that at midnight a despatch had come from Sandy saying that raiding-parties of Indians were in the valley, and that all the settlers had taken refuge at the post. "The general said to keep the thing quiet until we received further particulars, and sent orders to have the cavalry at Camp Sandy out at daybreak on the trail. From midnight up to half-past two reports came of the Apaches being in force along the valley, but not until half an hour before had anything indicated that they were west of the range. Then a ranchman from the Agua Fria had ridden post-haste into the quartermaster's corral saying that Olson's ranch had been burned and his family slaughtered; that lots of teamsters had been killed; and then we thought of you. I hurried off a message to Canker, who replied that you had left the post about ten o'clock, and he 'feared you had gone alone.' Then the general ordered 'G' company out at once, and the men are stirring up now. All the time though we were trying to keep the thing quiet so as not to spoil the Pelhams' ball, but just five minutes ago old Catnip and that lovely daughter of his—By Jove! Truscott, there's a girl to make your head swim—came at the general with point-blank questions

about you, and I don't see how we could have kept it much longer."

Then Truscott briefly reported the facts as known to him. Bright, the aide, went off to notify the general, and came back saying that the general begged Truscott to come at once to his quarters, and there Jack found an anxious group, consisting of the department commander, Colonel Pelham, and three or four captains of the —th, and after warm greetings and congratulations the adjutant again recited tersely the story of his ride. The general listened intently, never interposing word or query until it was finished, then it came. "How did you happen to have no orderly?" and though for a brief instant Truscott hesitated and looked embarrassed, he replied gravely that "an orderly had not been considered necessary, everything had been so quiet for months past," and his comrades at least felt pretty certain that in virtually taking upon himself the responsibility Jack Truscott was shielding a man who would have lost no opportunity of hurting his defender, could he have done so. The general's orders were prompt. The cavalry officers from Sandy were directed to make immediate preparations to return, escorted thither by the troops then saddling, and with hurried farewells they went off to attend to the matter. At the general's request the colonel and Truscott remained. "The ladies must all wait here at Prescott," he said. "Let Canker and 'the boys' have this tussle to themselves, Pelham, they will scatter and whip them back in short order. You and Truscott must wait here a day or two. Now, first thing, Truscott, I want your shoulder looked after. You are to stay with us. The

doctor will be here in a moment, and I'll show you your room." Truscott begged to be excused; he knew that the house was full of the fair sex, or would be as soon as they returned from the ball. Even then their silvery voices and laughter could be heard on the walk outside, and the adjutant was far from indifferent to his personal appearance. Just now, covered with dust and his uniform stained with blood, his face haggard with pain and fatigue, he would have much preferred going off to his bachelor comrades; but even as he was attempting to enter his protest the door opened, and Mesdames the General and Pelham, escorted by Lieutenants Hunter and Ray, came sailing in. "Pretty men you are to desert your wives in this way," vociferated the portly partner of the general, all in a good-humored glow after her pull up the hill. "Pretty men to—— Why, Jack Truscott! When did you get here? Why, you're so pale—and all blood—are you wounded? What's happened?" And so, hurriedly and disconnectedly, this good lady—"the warmest-hearted woman in the army," the Arizona exiles used to call her—poured forth question, sympathy, and welcome all at once upon her prime favorite, the adjutant of the —th.

"Now don't bother Truscott," the general vainly interposed. "The doctor's coming, and I want his shoulder dressed, or he'll be having fever in it;" but his better half could not be suppressed, and over again, quietly and smilingly, Jack strove to tell something of the day's adventures, but failed signally, because by this time both dames were popping questions at him quicker than he could singly answer either. Ray and

Hunter stopped only long enough to grasp his hand, and learn from their colonel that their companies were under orders, when they hurriedly left. The tramp of hoofs and jingle of Mexican spurs was heard in front, staff-officers came quickly and quietly in, received their instructions as quietly from the low-voiced general, and were off in a moment about their business. Pelham seated himself to write a few words of caution to Canker, who was a reckless and impetuous campaigner, whatever might be his disagreeable qualities, and Truscott, breaking away from his female inquisitors, had just stepped to the door to intrust this despatch to Bright, when he came face to face with Grace. It was almost a collision. Truscott stopped short, bowed low, and with a courteous "Pardon me," held the door open for her to pass. Grace bent her flushed and tearful face, sweeping one quick, furtive glance from under the long lashes at the tall soldier, stepped into the hall, and hearing many voices in the parlor, darted up the stairs to her room, there to bathe her eyes and collect her startled thoughts.

Finding Bright already gone, Truscott carried the despatch to headquarters, gave it to Captain Turner, and then, feeling weak and weary, returned slowly to the general's. The tear-stained face of the graceful girl who had swept past him at the doorway had by no means escaped his attention. He knew well that it was Grace Pelham, felt thoroughly satisfied that the footsteps bounding away into darkness as he came out upon the piazza were those of Glenham, had quickly decided that it was more than probable the latter would not care to see him just then, and so had not called

after him, and saved himself a fatiguing trip. Returning to the parlor, he was seized by his colonel. "Now, Truscott, I want to introduce you to my daughter. Never mind your dress, man; I *want* her to see what my fellows have to go through. She'll like you all the better, or I'll disown her." And, pale and half faint, Jack was led up to the group of ladies, and in another moment was looking down into the most glorious eyes he had ever seen, into a fair frank face that met his gaze with an expression of earnest interest and concern, while a slender white hand cordially greeted his nervous palm, and a gentle voice exclaimed, "It doesn't seem possible that you and I have never met before, Mr. Truscott; father's letters have made me feel as though I knew you." What man would not have thought her welcome both gracious and graceful? What mamma, with ambitious projects of her own, would not have shown alarm? Lady Pelham barely gave Jack time to offer any response before she burst in with, "Now, Grace, Grace, Mr. Truscott is utterly exhausted; too much so to talk, and (with cheerful irrelevance) I know that your father and he have a dozen things to attend to."

"Not a bit of it," said the colonel. "He sha'n't do another stroke of work to-night. I want him to get to bed, but, first of all, to meet Grace. Ah, Truscott, she could ride 'Apache,' I'll warrant you."

Grace, looking up into the calm features of her new acquaintance, marked a sudden change, a deeper pallor, a knitting of the tired brow, and a nervous twitching at the corners of the mouth. "Miss Pelham's riding is something the last year's graduates never tire of

talking about," he answered; but she thought only of the pang that seemed to shoot across his face, and eagerly spoke,—

"You must be suffering from your hurt, Mr. Truscott. Surely you ought to see the surgeon," and this at once brought the general's energetic lady to the rescue, even Mrs. Pelham promptly joining in the sympathizing chorus. Jack was remanded to his room, whither the general himself insisted on accompanying him; the doctor, already summoned, was soon on hand, and the ladies Pelham were left alone. Without a moment's hesitation madame took her daughter's hands in hers, looked searchingly into her face, and said,—

"Grace, you have been in tears. Has Arthur Glenham spoken to you?"

"Yes, mother."

"My darling child, I knew it!" And the maternal arms were thrown about the slender form, and an anxious kiss was pressed upon the pale forehead. Then,—
"And you answered him?"

Grace paused a moment. She well knew her mother's ambition, and her love for all the good that money can bring. She knew how hard she had struggled, planned, pinched, and saved that she, her one daughter, the very apple of her eye, should never lack for even the luxuries of life. She loved her tenderly, yet those half-spoken words of Glenham's had given rise to a painful suspicion. She raised her eyes to her mother's face, and replied,—

"I do not love him. I could not accept him, mother. I have tried not to encourage this avowal. Have *you* ever spoken with him? You surely have not let him

keep up this delusion. I told you at West Point it was useless."

"Grace, my daughter, think a moment what you are doing. He is a gentleman. He loves you devotedly. He can place you above any possibility of want or care in this world. You may never have such another opportunity. Why, my child, were your father to die to-morrow you would be penniless. Your brothers could do nothing for you. Is it possible you can be blind to our position?"

Slowly Grace Pelham drew herself from her mother's arms and stood thoughtfully before her. "Do you expect me to marry a man whom I merely like?" she asked.

"But why can't you love him?" broke in her ladyship, impatiently. "It will come soon enough, Grace; you are too sensible for mere romance. Why, to-night, when I saw you enter in tears, my heart was thankful. I thought of course they were due to anxiety and distress at his sudden summons to join his company. *Why* were you crying, I should like to know?"

"At his emotion. He seemed so—so—— *Mother!* answer me: had you given him cause to hope that I loved him?"

Mrs. Pelham hesitated. She knew her daughter's spirit, her keen sense of honor; she strove to find an answer that might evade the issue, yet satisfy the scruples of her child, but Grace's clear eyes were fixed upon her face. She reddened, then almost pettishly broke forth,—

"Of course I did not absolutely encourage him, but I did say you were too young to know your own mind,

and I'm sure I hoped you would come to your senses by this time. Grace, it is undutiful in you to question me like this. I'm sure I acted for the best, and he deserves better treatment at your hands."

Grace Pelham pressed her hands upon her temples. Less than a year ago, and again, less than six months, when their coming to Arizona was first discussed, her mother had told her that she had never spoken of the matter to Mr. Glenham; and now—for one moment she looked wonderingly, wistfully, into the flushed and angry face of the elder lady, then, with one half-stifled cry, "Oh, mother!" she fled to her own room.

Half an hour afterwards—a half-hour spent in bitter tears—she heard her father enter the adjoining room, and address his better half in his usual cheery tone: "It wasn't the wound that made Jack Truscott so miserable. His pet horse was killed under him in the fight, and he never said a word about it. Why, Dolly, you look used up. What's the matter?"

And Dolly replied in melodramatic grandeur, "Hush!"

Fatigue, excitement, distress, all had spent their force on Grace Pelham. Gentle sleep soon came to soothe her troubled spirit, but, mingling with her last thoughts those words floated through her drowsy brain, "His pet horse was killed under him, and he never said a word about it."

CHAPTER VI.

MEANTIME there had been the mischief to pay at Sandy. Captain Canker, as we have seen, was irate at the defeat of his little scheme for the "discipline" of his subordinates. It was some consolation to discover that Glenham had escaped the toils only at the expense of Truscott, who, thought Canker, would be far more missed at the ball than the officer whose going he had originally interdicted. Then when the telegraphic summons reached him which virtually made it his duty to send Truscott up to Fort Whipple, he was chagrined and disgusted beyond expression. There was an implied censure in the words "unless services are urgently needed" which indicated to him that the general thought his detention of either Glenham or Truscott a piece of arbitrariness ("not so much that as contrariness," explained Colonel Pelham afterwards) and unwarranted by the circumstances as known to him the night before the start. But Canker, like many a better man, was judged subsequently by the light of events that he could not then have known, and, unlike many a better man, received support and sympathy in place of censure. Now that two of the colonel's favorites had escaped him, Canker bethought him of a third victim, the regimental quartermaster. This officer, a gentleman who had grown old in service, was already gray

and rheumatic, who habitually walked with a cane when he walked at all, had originally been appointed to his staff position because, said the then commanding officer, "He isn't good for anything else." He had, nevertheless, proved a very efficient and valuable quartermaster, and had for some years performed the varied and intricate functions of that office without having added much to his own comfort, but a great deal towards the comfort of others. There is never a time on the frontier when the dames of the garrison, from the lady of the commanding officer down to the widow of the late Private Moriarty (who still hangs on to her husband's old company for sustenance), are not besieging the post quartermaster with some plea or other,—a partition to be put up here, a chimney repaired, glass put in, a new coat of paint in the parlor, a storm-door like the colonel's, a new stove like the one you gave Mrs. Major, or a wash-biler an' findher like Mrs. Mulligan's. They are always pestering him for something. The great depot of Jeffersonville does not contain the volume of stores that could be asked for by the women of a four-company post in one winter; there is never enough of any one item to go round, and always more applicants than there are coal-scuttles; somebody has to be refused, and frequently fifteen or twenty somebodies, and then nothing under heaven can save that quartermaster's reputation. The patience of Job (without his boils), the meekness of Moses, and the resources of Rothschild might help that functionary in his desperately hopeless task of satisfying a whole garrison, but they couldn't do it long. The more you give some women the more they demand, and the annual appro-

priation for the purchase of army stores and supplies could readily be distributed among the laundresses of any one regiment (in the days when we had those blessings) without satisfying their cravings for more. It isn't always that they really need the article demanded, they simply want something that some other woman hasn't, so that she may want and cannot get it, and the rule is general, being by no means confined to the sturdy wives of the rank and file, but applicable to the ladies whose garments they weekly washed and mutilated at New York prices. God help the nervous, sensitive, or irritable man who has to take these duties on his shoulders; not one in a hundred could long maintain a mental balance, let alone the financial ditto.

But Bucketts was no such martyr. He had been a colonel of volunteers, was shot through the leg in the Wilderness, and hobbled into the veteran reserves, thence into the infantry of the line as a second lieutenant, and had succeeded only in getting a modest bar on his shoulders when the consolidation of '71 took place and well-nigh stranded him. Thrown upon the unassigned list, he would have had small chance of retention but for the fact that the "Benzine Board" speedily made more vacancies in the cavalry than in the rest of the arms of service combined, and very properly, said the slow going infantry and artillerymen, we should profit by the fastness of you horsemen which has rendered promotion a possibility. And so several score of semi-invalided and semi-mustered-out footmen, dozens of whom had never straddled a horse in their lives (and to this day are objects of wonderment to their men when they "get into saddle"), became full-fledged cavalry

officers. Bucketts accepted the situation like a man, came out and joined the —th in Nebraska when the Union Pacific was being built, his baggage consisting of one trunk and three baskets of champagne. "Gentlemen," said he, "I understand that a cavalry officer who is thrown has to set up the wine for the crowd. The law of the land has made me a cavalryman, but all the Congressmen from the Capitol to John Chamberlin's couldn't make me a horseman. There's my credentials: pitch in, and let up on me hereafter!" Bucketts was a popular man from that day. Whereas Canker, who entered the —th at the same time and under precisely similar circumstances, barring the wound, seemed to imagine that his new commission as captain of cavalry carried with it all that the name implied, and that he became an authority on horses and horsemanship without further qualification. Profound discretion in the selection of his "mounts" had enabled him thus far to escape the ignominy of a "throw," but he never rode or could ride a horse twenty-five miles without laying that horse up chafed and sore for days afterward, yet he was incessantly punishing his men for faulty horsemanship.

Bucketts had not done a particle of guard duty for three or four years. His office duties were constant, and when not at his desk he would bestride a fat, easy-going little saddle-mule and amble about the post with a green-lined sun-umbrella hoisted over his head and blue-glass shades for his eyes, and thus keep track of the improvements and the working-parties; he gave his whole attention to his legitimate work, and was rarely called upon for any other; but this time Canker

concluded, in his own language, to "give Bucketts a whirl."

"My compliments to the quartermaster," said he to the orderly some hours after Truscott left the post, "and say I want to see him."

There had been a time when Bucketts and he were on intimate terms, had wellnigh concluded an alliance defensive and offensive on their entrance into the —th, because they thought that their new comrades would be apt to slight or snub them in some way; but Bucketts had speedily won his way into the affections and respect of the officers of the regiment, a thing which Canker never succeeded in doing, and he hated Bucketts and called him a "bootlick" behind his back because of his better fortune. They had drifted apart, and were only on terms of ordinary garrison courtesy, but Canker never lost an opportunity of endeavoring to worry Bucketts in some way, and generally got the worst of it, since Bucketts, without trying at all, could stir up a company commander a dozen times a day. However, Canker had the whip-hand now and meant to use it. It was just the time of day when the quartermaster, having completed the rounds of the post, was wont to send his mule to the corral, get out of his collar and cuffs into an easy old alpaca duster, and with a palm-leaf fan in one hand, and, not unfrequently, a comforting beverage of his own composition in the other, to spread himself upon a wicker settee in the cool retreat of his own parlor and doze away an hour in a noonday siesta. "I'll spoil his nap anyhow, d—n him!" gritted Canker between his teeth, "and I'll partly pay off old Catnip into the bargain."

Poor old Bucketts rose with a sigh as the orderly delivered his message, and having arrayed himself in his cool white blouse, he took his cane and umbrella and stumped slowly and painfully along officers' row in the blazing heat until he came to Canker's quarters, knocked and entered. "Mr. Bucketts," said the temporary commander (Bucketts was a brevet major, and generally so addressed; but Canker had not a brevet, even in the volunteer service, and ignored everybody else's when he could), "you will have to do officer-of-the-day duty. The colonel has seen fit to deprive me of the services of the adjutant this morning, and now I have nobody. You will have to act as adjutant, therefore, attend stables with Company A, run your own work, and go on as officer of the day."

Bucketts merely bowed acquiescence, and looked serenely undisturbed. Knowing his man, the communication was by no means unexpected. Indeed, before leaving, Truscott had asked him to attend to these very matters, and had sent a note to Canker informing him that the quartermaster would do so. Canker had an undoubted right to send for the latter and satisfy himself of the understanding, but if it had put the staff-officer to no inconvenience there would have been no solace to his wounded self-importance. Bucketts' unruffled urbanity only served to irritate him the more. "Anything further, sir?" asked the quartermaster after a pause, in which Canker had been pettishly tossing about some papers on his desk. "Yes, sir. Mr. Bucketts, when you come into the presence of your commanding officer you should wear your uniform: it is not respectful to appear as you are dressed."

"This is exactly what I wear every day in Colonel Pelham's presence, captain; he knows that I have to be out much of the day in the hot sun, and it has grown to be a custom here," replied Bucketts, coloring slightly, but speaking calmly notwithstanding his sense of annoyance.

"That don't excuse it, sir," said Canker; "Colonel Pelham has ideas of discipline which differ materially from mine. When I am in command it will not be permitted. That will do, sir." And Bucketts, mad enough to hammer his superior's features into pulp, which he could readily enough have done, stumped sadly off to his lonely quarters. So kindly and courteous himself, so ready to oblige, so considerate in all his relations with others, he nevertheless was keenly alive to any slight or injustice; and that a man who was in every way his mental inferior should take this method of despitefully entreating him was a hard thing to bear. But then that is one of the blissful features of army life.

Bucketts' misery was not one to lack for company. Too indignant to seek consolation in his customary nap, he was about to return to his office, when the doorway was darkened by the entrance of the officer of the day, one of the subalterns who had not been included in the Prescott party. He looked hot and ill tempered.

"Bucketts, lend me your mule; my horse is out at herd with the rest of them, and that d—d man, Canker, has sent me orders to go out at once and visit the herd guard. What's got into him, anyhow?"

"Take the mule if you like, but don't ask conundrums. He sent for me just now and rode over me

rough-shod for not being in uniform. I'm mad enough to take a drink. Have one?"

The junior assented, and, pending the arrival of the quartermaster's mule, the two officers discussed their toddy and the vagaries of their temporary post commander. Ten minutes spent in this occupation had partially blunted the edges of their grievances, and they were prepared to look with more equanimity upon matters in general, when the orderly trumpeter suddenly darted into the room.

"Commanding officer's compliments, sirs. Wants to see you both," and was off like a shot.

"Now what new devilment is he devising?" said Bucketts, ruefully, pulling off his "working-dress" and preparing to get into the hot uniform he had to wear. Before he could complete the change, however, there was a quick, sharp step along the piazza, and Canker himself appeared.

"Never mind your blouse now, Bucketts; it's business this time. Here, Mr. Carroll, get your herds in quick as a flash; take a dozen men with you, armed; I'll look out for your guard and prisoners; the Tontos have jumped the reservation!"

What change in tone and manner! Ten minutes ago, peevish, querulous, almost complaining, and entirely unjust, Captain Canker had disgusted his subordinates. Now, quick, animated, a soldierly ring in every word, his whole bearing commanded their respect. Many a time before had his comrades noted this odd trait in his character. The presence of danger, the chance of a fight, the excitement of active service wrought an instant change in the very nature of the

man—and in the thoughts of his officers. A moment before they were ready to hammer him, now eager to support and obey.

Carroll picked up his sabre, and started across the parade on the run. Canker and Bucketts followed as rapidly as the latter could stump his way while listening to his senior's recital of the news. Two ranchmen living up the valley had just come in to say that the Indians had swooped down and driven off their horses and cattle soon after noon. Then, before they had half told their story, a teamster came tearing in to the post from the Prescott road, his horse wounded, saying that the foot-hills were swarming with Apaches, and begging for ammunition. At the guard-house Canker ordered the sergeant to call in at once all the working-parties of the Indian prisoners, and himself inspected the locks and fastenings of the room in which some particularly hard cases were confined. Meantime, Carroll, with a dozen or more of the men, had hastened off to the westward, among the hills and ravines, to search for and bring in the herds, while throughout the barracks the men were quickly and without confusion buckling on their "thimble-belts" and revolvers, and gathering, carbine in hand, along the company parades. The civilians who had come in with the news were surrounded by an eager group, and were enlarging upon their experiences of the morning, when suddenly a shot was heard down under the bluff towards the post garden, where many of the Indian prisoners were kept at work during the day. It was quickly followed by another, then half a dozen sputtering shots, and some men over by the hospital, which commanded

a view of the low ground, were seen excitedly running towards the quarters, and could be heard shouting that the prisoners were breaking away. Canker seized a carbine. "Take command of 'A' company, Bucketts, and stay here. Come on, you other men;" and away he went at a rush, with half the command at his heels. Sure enough, the prisoners were loose. Running like deer, half a dozen of the lithe, swarthy fellows could be seen a thousand yards away, "streaking it" over the sandy bottom towards the foot-hills, others dashing towards the river, while here and there through the sage-brush and cactus, puffs of blue smoke shot out from carbine-muzzles indicated the slower pursuit of the astonished guard. Canker swore with rage. There would have been no earthly chance of recovering his charges, when suddenly, in a great cloud of dust and with the thunder of half a thousand hoofs, the herds of two of the companies came sweeping at full speed around a low hill towards the west, and, skilfully guided by the troopers in charge, bore down direct upon the corrals. "Mount! quick as you can, all of you!" he shouted, and signalling to the corporal in the lead of the herds, he threw himself upon his horse, quick as the other could vacate the saddle in his favor, and, carbine in hand, and calling again to his men to follow, he tore off towards the chase.

Bold horsemen there were in the old days at Sandy. There were men that day who threw themselves without either saddle or bridle upon their horses' backs, and trusted to voice, leg, and instinct to guide them. Others, less confident, bridled their chargers, but none stopped to saddle. In five minutes a hundred horsemen were

scattered over the valley in pursuit of the escaping Indians. Man after man they were run down, seized, and dragged back, most of them taking it as good-naturedly as though the escapade had been a mere school-boy lark devised for the entertainment of the garrison. Three or four were savage and sullen; only two made any resistance. Poor devils! they had nothing to fight with, and only one had been shot by the guard. Canker at first had furiously ordered his men to fire everywhere, but Mr. Carroll and some of the sergeants had quietly cautioned those nearest them to hold their shots or aim high. It was an easy matter to overhaul and recapture so helpless a foe, and shooting them down in cold blood was something the —th did not believe in. Canker himself thought better of his order as soon as he saw that his men were masters of the situation, and revoked it, so that the firing ceased entirely. In an hour all but five men were returned to the charge of the guard now strongly reinforced, and sending his prisoners back to the garrison, the commanding officer resumed the search for those still missing.

Up the stream-bed, through the willows, east, west, and north over the arid valley, the troopers scoured in knots of two or three, Canker riding to and fro, encouraging or swearing as occurred to him most expedient; and so another hour passed away. The men were widely scattered by this time, and it must have been towards five in the evening when there came from a gorge in the foot-hills, fully eight miles above the post, a sudden rattle of fire-arms. Instead of slackening after the first few seconds it increased, and Canker, pausing but an instant to listen, turned an attentive

ear to the veteran first sergeant, who rode on his left at the moment.

"That's no overhauling prisoners, captain; that's a fight," said he.

"Come on, then!" shouted Canker, and putting spurs to their horses, and signalling to all the men in sight, they dashed off in the direction of the firing.

It was a fight, sure enough. Far over among the foothills to the west, Lieutenant Carroll, with three or four men, had found traces of some of the fugitives. Following slowly as they could find further signs, they had at last come in sight of the chase, and way in a winding gorge or cañon had pushed in pursuit, when, without the faintest warning, a volley of rifles and arrows brought them to a sudden halt, and one of the men dropped from his saddle. To rein about and shout to his men to dismount and get under cover among the rocks was the work of an instant, and turning loose their horses, which would only have hampered them there, they scrambled half-way up the hill-side among a lot of loose boulders, and rapidly opened fire on the ambuscading Apaches. In three minutes they were joined by others of the command, and in five, Carroll felt justified in ordering an immediate rush upon the position of the enemy, some of the mounted troopers endeavoring to get around on their flank and rear. No especial order was observed. Every man took a hitch in his belt and a firmer grip on his carbine, and somebody said, "Now then, fellers!" the generic title by which the regular cavalryman invariably addresses or speaks of his comrades, and with that the fifteen or twenty blue-jackets had "bulged ahead," as

Carroll reported, and Canker, galloping in on his staggering charger, found his command skipping up the rocks like young rams, and the Apaches rapidly disappearing among the thickets of pine, scrub-oak, and juniper with which the mountain-side was covered. Horses were there of no avail, and the agility of the sinewy Indians far more of a power than our men could contend with. Pursuit was useless, and before dusk Canker had his mounted men hunting for the loose horses, while his courier galloped in to the post to summon the surgeon and the ambulance. Four of our men were struck and two seriously wounded, and, to his rage and mortification, Canker could not show a dead warrior to offset his losses.

It was in a very unpleasant frame of mind that he rode back to the garrison that evening. Five of his prisoners had escaped, four of his men were crippled, several horses gone. A general outbreak of the Apaches had evidently taken place. He had practically been confronted by them most of the afternoon. Their movements and the attempted escapade of the prisoners were doubtless concerted. So far they had very much the best of it, and what *could* he report to department headquarters?

At the north gate the quartermaster, with a grave and anxious face, was waiting for him.

"Captain Canker, Truscott has not reached Prescott, and Finnegan isn't in."

Canker turned white as a sheet, and with a stifled groan covered his face with his hand. "Come to the telegraph-office," was all he said, but that was an anxious night at Sandy.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Lady Pelham descended upon the household the day after the ball, the sight which met her eyes in the general's parlor was not one to add either to her placidity or her ordinarily reliable appetite. Mr. Truscott, with his uniform blouse thrown loosely over the injured shoulder, was ensconced in an easy-chair near the west window, and at the instant of her ladyship's entrance was looking earnestly up into the fair face of her daughter, who, for her part, was looking as earnestly down into the bronzed features of the adjutant, while her slender white hand was clasped about a goodly-sized envelope and letter. Considering the fact that the pair had been acquainted less than twelve hours, it must be conceded that her ladyship had cause to look surprised. Not another person was in the room when she opened the door and entered, breaking in upon this interesting *tête-à-tête*.

She paused abruptly upon the threshold, and for an instant simply stared at them. Truscott courteously rose, though with evident effort, and bade her a calm good-afternoon. Grace turning and seeing the expression on her mother's face flushed crimson, and yet moved quickly to her, and dutifully raised her lips to the maternal cheek with a gentle, "I hope you rested well, mother."

"*Very* well, thanks," was madame's stately reply. "You have all had lunch, I presume. Is nobody at home, pray?"

She was still smarting under the sting of last night's interview. She had been detected, she felt sure, in a piece of out and out equivocation, to call it by its most innocuous title, and detected by her only daughter. True to human nature, she was incensed at her daughter for having discovered her falsehood, and longed for a pretext to excuse or warrant an exhibition of parental displeasure, and here it was. Unwelcome as the sight would have been at any other time, there was something absolutely greedy in her reception of the circumstance now. Her daughter's kiss was unreturned, a frigid and unbending acceptance was all she vouchsafed her. Civility demanded that she should inquire as to the state of Mr. Truscott's wound, but her ladyship was not disposed to be civil, and in her wrath at what she chose to consider her daughter's undutiful conduct she decided to include under the ban of her censure the adjutant himself, who was in no way responsible. A very distant salutation, therefore, was her response to his courteous greeting. Seeing which, he as calmly resumed his seat, and became absorbed in the contemplation of some objects on the road in the valley below.

As for Grace, who never in her life had concealed a thought or had a secret from her mother, this assumption of displeasure on her ladyship's part startled at first, then wounded her with its utter injustice. Ten words would have explained the situation, but now she felt that anything like explanation was a self-humilia-

tion totally uncalled for; besides, there was really nothing in the situation that demanded anything of the kind. That is to say, not to the portly and peevish matron, who, without further word to either, swept through the parlor into the adjoining dining-room, whence her voice was presently heard requesting that solace to femininity—a cup of tea.

But the reader will want an explanation beyond doubt, and very humbly at your feet is it laid.

Truscott had slept but little. The excitement of the previous day, the irritation of his wound, poor "Apache's" death, and his anxiety about the next move of his comrades, all tended to restlessness. At nine in the morning the surgeon had come in and dressed his shoulder, finding Jack out of bed and already half attired. After a few questions he spoke gravely and decidedly.

"I'm not going to condemn you to staying in bed all day, Truscott, you will be better sitting in the parlor; but, no matter what turns up, you are not to quit this house; you are on sick report and under my charge. Of course I know you are fidgeting to get down to Sandy after the command, but Colonel Pelham is not going, and you shall not go." Truscott frowned but made no reply. The doctor went on with his sponging and his calm talk: "I saw the general fifteen minutes ago; he is waiting for news from Sandy and asked after you. Canker and his people started up the valley at daybreak, and the cavalry from McDowell and here are to work right over to the Mogollon range. The chief says that in four days most of the renegades will have slipped back to the reservation,

and only a few scattered bands will be out; but, by Jove! it was a miracle that you got through."

Then the doctor and Truscott had breakfasted together. The general and Colonel Pelham had dropped in to see him and charged him to keep quiet, and then gone over to headquarters. No one else appeared; the ladies were all asleep aloft. Some of the Sandy party had called at the door eager, probably, to hear any news the ladies of the general's household might have, or to retail that which they had heard, but, informed by the servant that no one was down, had reluctantly retraced their steps. All headquarters and Fort Whipple seemed to be sleeping off the effects of an all-night dance and jollification so far as Truscott could judge, but he could not see the busy life over at the offices and in the corrals, and so moped and read and fidgeted about the parlor until noon, without a soul to speak to and relieve his anxiety. As a consequence he fretted infinitely more and had less actual repose than if he had been in the saddle and on his way back to join his comrades on the war-path; but that is always the way. A man may be worrying his heart out with eagerness and anxiety to be in his proper place among his troopers, and some old woman of a doctor says, "Now stay in-doors and keep perfectly quiet if you want to pull out of this." How in the mischief, thought Jack, can a fellow be expected to keep perfectly quiet, or approximately quiet, at such a time? And then he almost swore to think that since nine not a man at the office had thought enough of him to send him word of the latest news from Sandy. There was not an orderly or a male servant about the premises, and Jack, pacing

feverishly up and down the floor, was just determining on mutiny and a sortie when the rustle of dainty skirts was heard upon the stairs: light footsteps came dancing down. Jack stopped short, and the door opened. For the second time Grace Pelham confronted Mr. Truscott.

"Which is it, good-morning or good-afternoon?" she blithely inquired, coming forward with frankly extended hand. "How is your shoulder? tell me that first," she hastily added, looking up into his face; for the hand which had taken hers for one brief second was hot and dry, and the bronzed face was flushed.

"Afternoon, I should say, if not evening or day after to-morrow. The morning has seemed interminable," he answered.

"Yes; and you have been growing feverish with every minute, I fear. Has the doctor been here?"

"He has; but the doctor I most need is your respected father, my colonel. In fact, Miss Pelham, for the first time in my acquaintance with that officer I have been tempted to upbraid him savagely. He promised to send me news from Sandy three hours ago, and here it is after one o'clock and not a word."

"Then there is no news," replied Grace, very calmly and with a half superior smile.

"I accept the implied rebuke in all humility," said Truscott, smiling, despite his worries, at the queenly decision of her words. "I am unworthy to hold my position another day, and shall resign the adjutancy in *your* favor."

"All the same you are anxious for news, and so am I. Possibly there is a way of relieving us both. Will you promise to sit down in that big chair and look at

pictures or read the papers for fifteen minutes? Will you promise?" she repeated.

"Solemnly," said Jack, and subsided into the seat nearest the window. The next instant he bent eagerly forward and half rose. "Confound it, she's going herself!" For, throwing a light circular over her shoulders, the girl had quickly left the house, and was even now briskly stepping down the broad walk towards headquarters. Truscott watched the graceful, slender form until it disappeared from sight, and then watched the spot where it disappeared for full five minutes. He was not given to soliloquy. I never knew a man that was,—novels by the thousand to the contrary notwithstanding,—but what he would have said, had he said anything, was, "Glenham, you are a lucky man."

Near headquarters Grace encountered two or three officers of infantry, one of whom eagerly went in search of Colonel Pelham, who promptly appeared and led his daughter into the general's office. "She says Truscott is fretting himself into a high fever," he explained to the chief, who had risen to greet her cordially, "and that she, too, wants to know how matters are going down at Sandy."

"You can tell him that he must have scared the tribe out of their wits in yesterday's fight," said the general. "They seem to be scattering in every direction."

"Give him this, daughter," said the colonel. "A courier just brought it half an hour ago. It is Canker's letter to me with full particulars, and tell him he is to keep quiet or I'll put a sentinel over him. You go and be the sentinel," he added fondly, and with her infantry friends as escorts Grace returned to the house.

Truscott, watching at the window, saw the quartette as they hove in sight, and instinctively pushed back his chair. "Confound those fellows!" he thought. "Of course she will ask them in, and I'm in no mood for talk with any of them." With that he slipped off to his own room. Two minutes after he heard voices on the piazza, the hall-door opened, and Grace Pelham's breezy tones fell upon his ear. "I know I ought to ask you in, but I won't. Mr. Truscott will defy the doctors and insist on having a talk with you all, whereas he is ordered to be perfectly quiet. Forgive me, won't you?" Then pleasant good-afternoons, a swish of skirts and pit-pat of feet along the hall, the noise of opening the parlor-door. Then a "Why!"—then silence.

For the first time that day Truscott's step was springy as he hastened back to the parlor. "Bless her heart," he thought, "she is as wise as she is pretty. Glenham, you are a mighty lucky man." And somehow his step faltered and his face clouded a trifle as he reappeared before her.

"Mr. Truscott, you have broken your arrest."

"I confess it," he said. "The sight of your escort was too appalling. Forgive me for ever having doubted your tact, but I'll never do it again. I did not see how you could discharge them at the door."

"Utterly specious and unsatisfactory. Go back at once to your limits." Jack returned to the chair. "Sit down." Jack obeyed. "Now listen to your instructions." And with that she stood threateningly over him, and with mock gravity delivered the general's message. Then that of the colonel with reference to

the sentinel being posted over him, until she came to recollect the injunction, "You go and be the sentinel," whereat the conclusion of her message lost suddenly its truculent character and she faltered. *Was* it a blush that suddenly mounted to her temples? Watching her intently he was sure he saw it, but she recovered her self-poise instantly. "And now, sir, here are despatches from the commanding officer at Camp Sandy which you are to read, mark, and pigeon-hole, I suppose." And still holding them in her right hand, she approached the arm of his chair with impressively uplifted finger. "But now that I am going to leave you in peace, remember that you are a prisoner. If you want anything——" And here her ladyship entered.

Jack had received his admonition with becoming gravity, as indeed it had been delivered. *Very* becoming he thought as, after the brief scene with madame, Grace hesitated for an instant at the parlor-door. She had announced her intention of leaving him alone,—she did mean to go. She had not been in the room with him more than sixty seconds when her ladyship appeared and saw fit to assume an air of tragic displeasure at so finding her. Now, knowing that she had been misjudged, the spirit of the woman was aroused. Truscott sat there with the despatch folded in his listless hand, looking not at it, but at her. Five minutes before this he was all impatience to get the particulars of the fight near Sandy. Here was the letter, and he did not open it; his eyes and his thoughts followed Grace, who had paused and was steadfastly gazing after her mother into the dining-room. Her hands were clasped before her, the fingers tightly inter-

lacing, and her bosom rose and fell rapidly once or twice. Something hot and dry seemed to catch in her throat. She turned abruptly towards him once more and met his earnest gaze, then without another word quickly withdrew her eyes, the long lashes sweeping down over her cheeks, bent her head, and hurried from the room. Truscott heard her ascending the stairs; he listened to her light footfall overhead, heard her close the door of her room, and all was still except madame's clinking knife and fork in the adjoining room. The letter still lay in his hand, but he did not open it. Once more he turned his eyes to the window and gazed thoughtfully out over the shallow valley towards the pine-crested heights on the western side; full five minutes he sat thus, then madame's chair made a discordant noise upon the floor, her voluminous skirts rustled in premonition of her coming; he started, opened Canker's letter, shook himself into attention, and began to read in earnest as she re-entered the room.

Even that potent mollifier, tea, seemed to have failed in its office on this occasion. What woman is so hard to placate as she who knows herself to be in the wrong? Mrs. Pelham was in a most unenviable mood as she returned to the parlor. Her sleep had been unrefreshing, her morning toilet unaided by Grace's deft fingers. She had repelled her daughter's affectionate advances on her first appearance, and been discourteous, if not downright rude, to Mr. Truscott. Now she chose to consider herself aggrieved because her hostess, the general's wife, was still sleeping the sleep of the just and the clear of conscience in her own room, while she,

Lady Pelham, was left without a soul with whom to sympathize or squabble. It would have been balm to her troubled spirit just now to have had one or two of her cronies at hand, and with them to have dissected the toilets and characters of the ladies attending the ball. Even comparative strangers would not have been unwelcome, for that feminine freemasonry which puts most of the sex on terms of interesting ease with one another when discussing the absent would soon have created a distraction for her gloomy reflections. But she was practically alone. Truscott merely looked up and bowed gravely, then returned to his reading. She did not fancy going up-stairs and possibly meeting Grace. She did not care to disturb her hostess. She had nothing to occupy her in the parlor. She would have been glad to talk with Truscott and satisfy herself as to this reputed intractable; her curiosity was piqued by all she had heard of him; but it was evident that he had noted her discourteous greeting, and that now any advances towards conversation must come from her: he was not the man to be cajoled one minute and dropped the next; but she was still too rancorous to stoop to conciliation, so she stood a moment tossing the cards and notes on the centre-table, and carelessly examining the inscriptions thereon, then she marched out on the piazza and majestically paced up and down, sniffing the bracing air and keeping keen watch for any ladies who might appear along "Head-quarters Row." Late as many, if not most of them, had slept, she knew full well that the interest and excitement attendant upon the sudden departure of the cavalry officers for the field would soon bring them to-

gether to discuss the probabilities, and presently there appeared, leading her little daughter by the hand, poor Mrs. Tanner, "like Niobe, all tears."

Among some of her companions this gentle lady was held pretty much as Mrs. Major O'Dowd, of blessed memory, regarded that poor, weak-spurred Amelia, and like Amelia there wasn't a man in the —th who would not have leaped to her defence. She had married early, had lost the darling of her heart—a winning blue-eyed baby girl—in the stirring days when the regiment was clearing the way for the transcontinental railways, and her dearly-loved husband was constantly with his troop scouting over the prairies, while she, lonely and heart-sick, watched over the cradle of their little one in the humble log hut which had been assigned them as quarters. Her agony when that baby was taken from her, her dumb, patient suffering when the regiment was ordered to Arizona and she had to bid farewell to the little grave under the cottonwoods (poor Tanner had lifted her in his arms, finding her white hands firmly clutching the bunch-grass on the tiny mound), the wistful, far-away gaze in her soft eyes all through that tedious and dreary journey, none of the officers had ever forgotten; nor had they forgotten her constant efforts to appear bright and cheerful, especially to her husband, whose heart was sorely wrung with their loss, yet, stubborn and manlike, strove to hide its wound under the guise of unwonted brusqueness of manner, sometimes even to her.

And then the night of that dreadful storm on the Pacific, when they were off the coast of Lower California, and not a soul on board the laboring steamer

believed that day would ever dawn upon them, how calm and brave and serene she was! while, if regimental traditions were reliable, Mesdames Turner and others whom we won't mention had behaved like lunatics, and made consummate nuisances of themselves. Somehow that storm-night on the old "Montana" was never a popular reminiscence with the ladies of the —th. It *could* not be, since no man of their acquaintance could ever be induced to omit some such remark as, "By Jove, what a little heroine Mrs. Tanner was!" when alluding to it. They had always spoken of her rather pityingly up to that time. "So daft about her husband and that baby, you know; she can't think of anything else." But that night she had serenely taken care of other women's olive branches while their husbands were on deck helping the ship's officers, and they themselves were indulging in hysterics or lamentations. Not all, be it understood. There were three brave women there that night, but two of them are so fortunate as to have no place in our story, and to have had the good luck not to be stationed with regimental headquarters at Sandy when all those most unpleasant episodes—but this is anticipating. The ladies of the —th respected Mrs. Tanner,—they could not help respecting her,—but all the same they levelled their little slings of malice and all uncharitableness whenever they were in conclave among themselves, and whenever they dared at other times, for they could not forgive it in her that the officers to a man should refer to her as the bravest and pluckiest and sweetest-natured little woman in the regiment. They could not be expected to forgive it in her that she absolutely held herself aloof from all gar-

rison gossip or small talk, that she was always courteous and kindly, always bright and cordial to those who sought her society ; but she had no intimates, as women define them, except her husband, and feminine confidences were with her unknown. A devoted wife, a rapturously loving mother to the little ones who had come to partially replace the idolized first-born, she made her home her sanctuary, and his, and there peace and happiness, if ever they are permitted to abide with us, reigned perennially.

Mrs. Tanner was not the utterly weak-spirited woman her sisters would have made her out to be. Though she preferred to shine in the pure light of her own fire-side rather than in the glare of garrison society, and in her retiring way was far more apt to hide her light under a bushel than to permit its radiance to be seen abroad, those who knew her well soon discovered that she was far better informed, far *deeper* than the average army woman, that she had cultivated and refined tastes, that she was not plain by any means, for, when interested, her face would light up vividly, and her eyes were lovely whether in animation or repose. Her features, despite their habitual pallor, were delicate and regular, her hair soft and brown and wavy, and her voice—ever that matchless gift in the woman who wins and would hold the queendom of her home—low and sweet. The ladies of the —th had long since abandoned their sly allusions at her expense when speaking to their husbands or the men who knew her. Green subalterns, just joining, were disposed at first to keep at a distance from her, and were wont to dance attendance for their year of “plebe-hood” at the skirts of other ladies her

seniors in years but juniors in manners. She never sought to attract anybody.

Now, one would suppose that such a woman was above suspicion, and that so pure, so chaste, so retiring in thought and act, she at least would escape calumny. But once, just once, a strange thing had happened, and over and over again had the ladies of the —th rolled it with their tongues, pulled it out of shape, twisted and tortured and, some of them, swearing that they did not believe, believing had gone so far as to transplant the story to alien soil and let it grow like a weed in the luxuriant gardens of other regiments. During the first year after they came into Arizona the heroine of the “Montana” had noted an odd, half-hesitating manner on the part of the ladies of the infantry and the staff on receiving her; some had failed to call. Finally Tanner had noticed it, and not until he questioned her did she admit that she was struck by the circumstance. Tanner tried to fathom it, but found that his brother officers fought shy of the question. Truscott was his stand-by ordinarily, but Truscott and he were not at the same post for some time after entering the Territory; indeed, the entire regiment was in the field scouting and fighting through the Apache-infested mountains, and in all the anxiety and distress experienced by the ladies in garrison while the regiment was in daily conflict with the savages, and in the excitement and incidents of the campaign, the affair faded from the mind of the people generally, and nothing more was said or done on the subject for quite a little while.

But the story was a serious one, and in a very few minutes Mrs. Pelham was to be made acquainted with it in

all its details. How much better, therefore, not to tell it here, but to wait and let those innate romancers, the ladies of her coterie, tell it themselves! As yet there was but slight acquaintance between Mrs. Pelham and Mrs. Tanner, the former, however, had been greatly impressed, shrewd society woman that she was, by the perfect manners and gentle ways of the little lady; had admired her at the ball the night before, and was disposed to "cultivate" her, as the expression goes. At this moment, however, Mrs. Tanner would have been glad to avoid an interview. The captain had left her at sunrise hurrying back with his comrades to join their commands at Sandy, and she, late in the day, had started out to give her little girl a needed airing when she met a soldier of her husband's troop, who had come back with despatches and brought her a few pencilled lines from him. Their loving tenderness and the allusion he made to a little locket which he always carried in his breast,—a locket containing a golden curl from the bright head sleeping under the sod in far-away Kansas,—these combined had overcome her self-control, and as she retraced her steps and strove to reply to the light-hearted prattle of her little one, the tears were streaming from her eyes, and it was thus she encountered the glances of the colonel's wife.

"What is it, Mrs. Tanner?" said that lady, by no means unsympathetically, as she hastened down the steps to greet her. "No ill tidings, I hope; you look so distressed. Do come with me and rest awhile; there is no one here." And, taking her hand, she led the young mother to the piazza.

Hurriedly thanking her and striving hard to control

her emotion, Mrs. Tanner assured Lady Pelham that there was no real cause for her apparent distress, apologized in fact for her weakness, and presently succeeded in leading the conversation to the ball of the night before and to Grace herself. On these topics the ladies were getting along admirably when little Rosalie, playing about the balcony, suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, mamma, mamma, here's Uncle Jack!" and turning, Mrs. Tanner caught sight of Mr. Truscott seated close to the parlor-window and smiling greeting to the child. She rose instantly, walked to the window, and finding it impossible to hear his reply to her inquiries, and in response to his beckoned "Come in!" she returned to Mrs. Pelham, saying, "I had not hoped to find Mr. Truscott able to sit up; may I go in and see him?"

"Why—certainly—I suppose so," replied madame, not very cordially, however, for she did not relish the evident pleasure with which the younger lady accepted the prospect of quitting her society for his; but Mrs. Tanner never noticed the change in tone, and, taking Rosalie with her, entered the house. She had hardly closed the hall-door when three ladies appeared, issuing from the adjoining quarters of the adjutant-general, and came briskly down the path, all smiles and salutations, to greet her ladyship. In another minute Mrs. Raymond, Mrs. Turner, and the wife of one of the staff-officers were seated in cosy conversation with Mrs. Pelham, chatting as gleefully as though separation from their lords were an every-day affair, and not at all to be deplored beyond the conventional, "So horrid, you know; and now I suppose the infantry ball will be

abandoned entirely." Then came inquiries for Grace, and lavish praises of Grace's beauty and bearing. Both ladies of the —th were evidently bent on making as favorable an impression as possible on the colonel's wife, and their Fort Whipple friend as a consequence was allowed small share in the chatter. In the midst of the talk the hall-door opened, and as they rose expectant of receiving Miss Pelham there reappeared Mrs. Tanner and Rosalie.

"Why, good-afternoon, Mrs. Tanner; I'd no idea you were here," was the greeting of the three. Mrs. Tanner pleasantly responded to their salutations, inquired if they had heard any news from the detachment, briefly told them of the note she had received from her husband, and then turning to Mrs. Pelham bade her good-morning, left some message for Grace, and excusing herself to all for hurrying home she and Rosalie went smilingly away.

"What a charming little woman!" said her ladyship after a pause, during which all four pairs of eyes had followed the two out of earshot.

"Sweet," said Mrs. Turner, reflectively.

"So gentle and ladylike," said Mrs. Raymond.

"I've always admired her so much," said their companion. Then came a pause.

"It is a perfect mystery to me how any one can help liking her," said Mrs. Raymond, softly and slowly. Another pause.

"Well, I *always* did," said Mrs. Turner, dreamily gazing across the valley.

"And I supposed everybody did," said Mrs. Pelham, looking very intently at her two "subordinates,"

who thereupon became more intently interested in some distant objects, waiting with well-assured shrewdness to be drawn out by further questioning.

"Has she been in to see Grace?" asked the staff lady.

"No," replied her ladyship, promptly. "She went in to see Mr. Truscott."

Instantly Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Turner exchanged glances of much significance, which Mrs. Pelham was as quick to observe, and which, as soon as satisfied that she had observed, the two ladies discontinued and again became absorbed and preoccupied in manner.

The other lady said "Oh!"

Now, there are dozens of ways of saying "oh," each eminently expressive of some different idea or emotion. This one was eminently expressive of, "Well, of course it's her own business, but if *I* were in *her* place," etc., and then there was a general lull of at least three seconds in the conversation. Just enough had been said, indicated, and acted to pique her ladyship's curiosity to the utmost. She readily divined that any one of the three ladies could impart interesting information, and as all sat silent, as no attempt had been made by any one of them to change the subject of conversation, it was evident enough that all she had to do was to start them and the story, whatever it was, would speedily be at her service. There *are* women in the army, thank God! who at such a crisis would have calmly and decidedly led the talk into another channel and virtually have declined to be made the recipients of a garrison scandal, but their number is not legion, and Lady Pelham is not of their number.

The silence was broken by her.

"Why, I hope there is no reason why I should not like Mrs. Tanner. Is there, Mrs. Raymond?"

"No indeed. Far from it—only——" said that politic lady, beginning vehemently and concluding with vague and hesitating manner, indicative of anything but triumphant confidence.

"If anything is not as it should be, surely *I* ought to know it," persisted madame, slowly and impressively; "and surely, Mrs. Raymond, my friends ought not to keep me in ignorance."

This being precisely what both Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Turner thought, and exactly what both expected Mrs. Pelham to say at this juncture, a little further coquetting with the subject became appropriate.

"Indeed, Mrs. Pelham, there isn't anything,—that is, *I* never believed it; and it's something I never can bear to think of, and have *never* alluded to," said Mrs. Raymond, and actually at the moment she believed her own assertion.

"Mrs. Turner, it is evidently a matter you all know. Is there any reason (majestically) why *I* should not be informed?"

"Oh, dear, no! Mrs. Pelham," replied Mrs. Turner, "only it's a thing I never would have mentioned for the world. Even now I can't believe it; and when I heard it at the time, *you* know, Nellie (appealingly to Mrs. Raymond), I said it couldn't be true. She was too thorough a lady, and then he had never——"

"Yes, I know, dear," broke in Mrs. Raymond, "and so did I, and how it ever got out I *never* could imagine. I know Captain Raymond was furious when he heard that Mrs. McGinty, of the infantry, speak of it, and

he said it would be a bad day for the gossips if it ever reached Truscott's ears."

"Truscott! Mr. Truscott!" exclaimed Lady Pelham, now all agog with curiosity. "Pray what had he to do with it?"

And then, little by little, in fragments, and with mutual assistance, promptings, and suggestions, but never without such comments as, "You know I can't believe it, although——" and, "He has never shown her any more attention than he has anybody else, except——" etc., etc., the direful story came out.

Divested of its feminine embroidery, it amounted, substantially, to this: Truscott had been first lieutenant of Tanner's troop in the old Kansas days, and when in garrison, which was seldom, had shown a decided fondness for spending his evenings at the Tanners' quarters; he "messed with them," as the army expression goes, in the days when only two companies of the —th were stationed at Fort Harker, and he did not find the society of the infantry officers altogether as desirable as it subsequently became.

He used to write frequently to them after he was made adjutant and joined headquarters, especially after the baby died, and all this seemed natural enough. When the regiment was ordered to Arizona, Captain Tanner's troop went with the first detachment, leaving Kansas early in December. Truscott did not arrive in Arizona until some months after they did. Tanner with his company was out on a scout, and she, with her new mite of a baby, was at Camp Phoenix when Truscott unexpectedly appeared at the post and went, within an hour of his arrival, to call upon her, and

Mrs. Treadwell, rushing in unceremoniously as next-door neighbors will, was stupefied to find Mrs. Tanner sobbing in Jack Truscott's arms. She could have sworn she was looking up in his face and kissing him as she entered the hall and saw them through the half-opened door. Now, in justice to Mrs. Treadwell, who was the wife of one of the prominent field-officers of the regiment and a most worthy woman, let it be recorded that for an entire fortnight she kept the thing to herself.

Truscott was at the post four days, and during that time had otherwise shown no more attention to Mrs. Tanner than to the other ladies, and *possibly* not a soul would ever have heard of this affair but for the fact that a nurse-maid employed by Mrs. Tanner was suddenly discharged about this time for good and sufficient reason, and was furnished transportation to the nearest town. Servants were scarce and high in Arizona, and the Abigail had no difficulty in finding immediate employment, and in informing her new mistress, the wife of a large contractor, that the reason of her leaving Mrs. Tanner was that she couldn't stay in a house where there was such goings on as she had seen between her and the adjutant. Thus started, the story attained in less than no time colossal proportions and soon reached Camp Phoenix. Mrs. Treadwell was told confidentially by another lady of the servant's story, and was asked point-blank whether she had ever noticed anything, which, being a next-door neighbor, she might have done, and, the lady being her most intimate friend, Mrs. Treadwell imparted her secret.

Thus it was that the story gained the solid foundation

that first was lacking, but once surely grounded there is no telling to what heights an army story may not soar. It fairly flew about from post to post, and women who had never seen anything out of the way in the friendship of the Tanners and Truscott before now recalled a dozen suspicious circumstances they never could account for. This explained her agitation at Yuma on receiving a letter in his handwriting. This was why she never could listen to any of the stories in circulation about other people's frivolities. This was why he was so set against gossip and small talk, and finally a dozen ladies of the —th had settled in their own minds that that artful little Mrs. Tanner was actually the cause of his broken engagement. How they wished they knew the girl's name!

Nor was it a story confined to the fair sex. Such worthies as Mrs. Wilkins and others had speedily imparted it to their husbands and to the men who were jealous of Truscott; and Canker, Crane, Wilkins, and others of that ilk had stealthily discussed it among themselves, but had been cautious enough to say nothing about it to Truscott's friends or to Tanner's. One night, however, Mrs. Turner, in the exasperation of some trivial matrimonial squabble, stung by a most injudicious though very just comparison drawn by her liege lord between her conduct and Mrs. Tanner's, had burst forth with, "Mrs. Tanner, indeed; if you knew what I know about that woman you would not dare insult me by comparing me with her!" whereat honest Captain Turner was thunderstruck, and then very flatly told his wife that he had heard too many garrison stories laid at her door, and warned her that there was

one woman she had better not asperse, and that was Mrs. Tanner.

Oh, foolish and short-sighted mortal! What greater provocation could he give the wife of his bosom? In a minute she had accused Mrs. Tanner, and that "paragon of yours, Mr. Truscott," of half the sins in the decalogue, and was ready to prove it. "Ask Mrs. Raymond, ask Mrs. Wilkins, ask Mrs. Anybody," flashed the indignant lady in response to the pishes and pshaws and trashes with which he greeted her vehement recital, till finally both had lost utter control of their tempers, and Captain Turner had clinched the nail of his domestic enormities by slamming out of the room with the parting remark, "Well, my dear, if you have known all this of Mr. Truscott for the last six months, your eagerness for his society and attentions is utterly unbecoming, to say the least," and very properly she would not speak to him for a week afterwards.

All the same, Turner was seriously discomfited; he thoroughly liked Truscott and he loved his regiment, was proud of its name and its record, proud of the honor of its officers and of their ladies. In her fury Mrs. Turner had told him that those two names, Truscott's and Mrs. Tanner's, were bandied about all through the Territory. He didn't believe it, but something had to be done if such were the case. He didn't want to go to the colonel with the story, for then there would be an awful row. He did not want to go to Truscott, for then he would have to give his authority, and the chances were that in tracing the thing to its foundation there would be no end of snarls and entanglements, and if any man was found to have had a word

in the thing, why, the Lord be merciful to us, thought Turner—Truscott or that man would have a military funeral, and we're having too much of that now. Raymond was away and he couldn't consult him ; as for the others, the only man at headquarters whom he felt willing to talk to was old Bucketts, and Bucketts had blocked the whole game by sharply declining to hear a word on the subject. "I don't know ; I don't want to know. Whatever it is, it's a d—d infamous lie, and I won't listen to it !" said the quartermaster hotly. It seems he had overheard Canker and Wilkins one evening, had just caught enough of their conversation to get the drift of it, and had thereupon burst upon their startled ears with such a "tongue-lashing" as even their wives did not often devote to them. Just what to do Turner could not imagine, but, as has been said, the all-engrossing excitements of the campaign soon drove the matter out of his thoughts, and when that was over the ladies had apparently dropped it. Then Major and Mrs. Treadwell had been promoted to another sphere of duty and left Arizona, and up to this day neither Tanner, Truscott, nor Colonel Pelham had ever heard a word of the story. As for Mrs. Tanner, it soon became evident even to her detractors that her general character and conduct would absolutely render them liable to the imputation of deliberate slander. The men would listen to no repetition of their statements. The contractor's wife, who with the nurse had started the story, had both fallen into the further disrepute to be expected of them, and Mrs. Treadwell, the one reliable though only partial witness, was now two thousand miles away. And so the story only smoul-

dered for two or three years, and even when, a few months before the coming of her ladyship, the Tanners had been transferred with their troop to regimental headquarters, and several ladies watchfully waited to note the bearing of Truscott and Mrs. Tanner towards each other, the sharpest eye could detect no difference between the grave courtesy with which he always treated her in public and that which marked his intercourse with all the rest.

As for other indications, he perhaps was more frequently at Tanner's at dinner or tea than elsewhere, but always with Tanner, and it must be confessed that the situation was rather disappointing.

All this or most of it, and much more than some parts of it, Mrs. Pelham listened to with politely veiled avidity, and when finally she had extracted all the information possible from her three not unwilling witnesses (once started they outrivalled one another in volubility), she carefully expressed her conviction that though there might have been something very imprudent some years past, it was all over and done with now. "And so we won't tell any one of this conversation, will we?" was the parting injunction to the ladies of her "suite" as the appearance of Colonel Pelham, sturdily tramping up the walk, warned them that it was time to change the subject. Then as that gentleman manifested no desire to remain with them, but immediately inquired for Truscott and went in to see him, the ladies, finding other subjects of trivial interest compared with the one they had so wellnigh exhausted, concluded to leave.

But tell it Mrs. Pelham did, and mercilessly, and soon

CHAPTER VIII.

NOTWITHSTANDING his prophecy that Canker and the boys would whip the renegades back into the reservation in two or three days, the general determined to go down to Sandy and take a hand himself. All that day he had fidgeted about the office dissatisfied with the meagre reports that came, and the more that came the more it looked as though Canker's brief administration of command had not been felicitous. At five o'clock in the afternoon he quietly appeared at the house, and without telling Colonel Pelham of his intention, was making his characteristically brief preparations for the start when the colonel caught him in the act, and very positively announced that he would go too. Mrs. Pelham had protested, of course, but there were some things in which she could not move her lord, and this was one of them. "There, now, Dolly," he said, "that will do. I've only ten minutes in which to get ready and no time for argument. Where's Grace?" So Grace came with ready hand to her father's assistance, asking no questions and evidently regarding his decision as eminently proper and incontrovertible.

Her ladyship would fain have button-holed the general himself and importuned him not to let the colonel go, but, once before in her life, such a perform-

ance on her part had come to the ears of her ordinarily placid and even-tempered husband, and his remarks anent that piece of petticoat interference had been a revelation. Indeed, nothing but tears, contrition, and a solemn promise on her part never, never to do such a thing again had saved her from consequences more serious than a marital lecture; but this was a long time ago, so long that her resolution never to do so again had been modified by the mental reservation of "when there is a possibility of being found out."

The general, indeed, had not intended to take Pelham with him, yet was secretly glad to have him return at once to Sandy. "Things worked better when he was there." And so it resulted that by six o'clock that afternoon Jack Truscott found himself left alone in a household of ladies.

To say that he was downright unhappy over the circumstance would be more than so gallant and courteous a man as Truscott would say himself, but to say that he, on the contrary, was not, would be a wide departure from the truth. He knew nothing of his superior's plans until the ambulance drove up to the door, and the sight of the general's favorite aide in his well-worn and well-known scouting costume sent Truscott's pulse up to one hundred and twenty at a bound.

Stepping into the hall, he met Grace with her father's cloak and Navajo blanket in her arms. "We are stealing a march on you, Mr. Truscott," she smilingly remarked, glancing over her shoulder at the colonel himself, who came waddling after her down the stairs. Shall it be recorded? Truscott's eyes, full of surprise and pain, even of reproach, had not so much as a glance

for her; he answered not a word, but mutely stood questioning his chief.

"I couldn't help it, my dear boy; don't look as though I had deserted you," that warm-hearted gentleman had hastened to explain. "I only knew fifteen minutes ago that the general was going, and I decided to slip off and run down with him. I knew just how you'd feel, Truscott, and hadn't the heart to tell you. Confound it, man, I'm only going to Sandy, not into the field, and if you'll only keep quiet you will be able to come down yourself in less than a week."

"Has anything gone wrong?" asked Truscott.

"Nothing at all. Only the general wants to look after things himself, and can do so more readily at Sandy than here. I'll leave Mrs. Pelham in your charge, and you in Grace's. Think you can keep him in subjection, daughter? He is tractable enough ordinarily, but just now he wants a steady hand."

Then the general came forth, followed by his philosophical wife, who was amiably assuring Lady Pelham that this was a thing she wouldn't mind after six months in Arizona. "I've grown so used to it as never to be surprised at his waking up and starting off somewhere in the dead of night."

Five minutes more and the ambulance had rattled off down the hill, leaving the three ladies and Truscott a silent group on the piazza,—Grace looking sad and anxious, madame melodramatic, Truscott very pale and quiet, and their hostess alone cheery.

"Come, now, I won't have any moping," she said. "We'll get everybody up here this evening and have lots of fun. Jack Truscott, you shall have twenty

nurses. Grace, all the infantry boys will be here on your account. Come, let's go in and order tea. I'm hungry as a dozen bears."

Early in the evening Truscott managed to slip away from the noisy party assembled in the parlor and sought his own room. He excused himself to his hostess on the plea of fatigue, and she, big-hearted woman that she was, and knowing full well that his heart was anywhere but in the glee and merriment and music and twaddle going on, covered his retreat very successfully.

Later she went to his door with some comforting drink of her own manufacture, found him sitting up and pretending to read, and later still, noting the interest with which Grace had inquired for him, she placed some delicate custard in her hands, saying, "Take it to him; he'll like it."

Truscott heard the light footsteps he had already learned to recognize coming along the hall, then a pause at his door, and presently a timid, fluttering little knock. "Come in," he said.

The door slowly opened, and there stood Grace upon the threshold smiling and with a suspicion of heightened color in her face. He rose to greet her, but she protested. "Don't get up; I was asked to bring this to you," with the slightest emphasis on the "asked." Nevertheless he stepped to the doorway, took the custard from her hands, and then, leaning against the door-post, stood looking down at her.

"Miss Pelham, are you in a merciful mood?" he asked.

"I! Unquestionably. Why not?" And the earnest eyes looked frankly up in his face.

"Then you will grant me absolution for a sin of omission," he said, smiling. "The sight of my chief starting for the war-path startled me into a rudeness towards you."

"In that you did not answer an utterly unimportant remark of mine, I suppose. As you *ought* to have discovered, Mr. Truscott, I claim to be a soldier's daughter, and do not expect to be considered at such a time."

"Then you are a marvellous exception to the rest of your sisterhood," said Jack, with an emphatic impulsiveness very unusual in him.

"Indeed, Mr. Truscott? Is that your opinion of our sex? How did you ever succeed in winning the name of being so very gallant and courteous, I wonder? I thought you the champion of all the ladies of the regiment. I'm sure they do; and what *would* they say if your treachery were known?" she added, laughing.

"I am at your mercy," he replied. "Betray me and I am ruined. Thank you for bringing this to me, and good-night. Don't let me keep you from the fun."

A ring at the door-bell, and the servant admitted a tall sergeant of cavalry. "A despatch for Lieutenant Truscott," they heard him say. Truscott called to him to come thither, and as he opened the envelope Grace, not knowing why, but anxious for any news, remained.

Leaning against the casement he slowly read the message, and Grace patiently stood looking up into the pale, clear-cut face.

"This will be welcome news to Mrs. Tanner," he said, presently, "and I would like her to know it to-night. Is she here?" he asked Grace.

"Mrs. Tanner? No. She has not been here at all."

"She never had heart for fun of any kind when he was in the field, Miss Pelham, and this will greatly relieve her anxiety. His company is ordered to remain at the agency on guard for a few days; the others have gone across into the Red Rock country. Take this over to Captain Lee's quarters and ask that it be shown to Mrs. Tanner at once, sergeant, then come back to me," he said; then turning again to Grace, "Late as it is I think she will still be awake, and this news may put her to sleep."

"I am so glad for her sake. She seems so very lovable a woman. They have all been extremely pleasant to me, but there was something especially winning in her manner, and I like her greatly. *You* know her very well, do you not?" asked she, still looking frankly up in his eyes.

"Better than any of the ladies, I think," he replied. "May I ask how you so readily divine my friendships?"

"I had heard that you were very warm friends. It was Mr. Glenham who told me—I think." (You knew, Grace, and it wasn't like you to hesitate there.)

"Ah, yes,—Glenham," he repeated, while for the life of him he could not repress a mischievous merriment on noting how at the mention of the name she had faltered, and, under the steady glance of his eyes, colored red an instant after. "Glenham has doubtless been a most efficient means of strengthening your acquaintance with the regiment, but I warn you against his enthusiasm; you will come expecting to find us models of genius and geniality, and will be all the more bitterly disappointed."

"He certainly glories in his regiment, Mr. Truscott, and, as one of his heroes, you ought not to disparage his opinions."

"Grace dear, I want you," at this juncture was heard in solemn and remorseless tones from the other end of the hall. Grace started like the guilty thing she certainly was not, and beheld the matronly form of her ladyship rigidly posed at the parlor-door. There was something indefinably, gratingly disagreeable about her voice and manner, that intangible something that a woman can throw into her tones as expressive of the extreme of displeasure, and yet be able to subsequently and triumphantly establish that you have no grounds whatever for saying so.

"Good-night, Mr. Truscott," said Grace. "Please let me know when you send any despatch to the valley." Then seeing her mother still stonily, severely awaiting her, she did just what she would not have done had she felt herself unwatched,—turned, held out her slender hand, and said, warmly, "I *do* hope you will have a good night's rest and feel ever so much better to-morrow. Good-night," and then walked briskly off down the hall, looking calmly into her mother's face. That lady contented herself for the time being with ushering her erring daughter into the parlor. It must be admitted that the latter had delayed much longer at Truscott's door than the delivery of a plate of custard could possibly warrant, and that her present attitude towards her mother was not as dutiful and loving as it might be.

Half an hour afterwards, when the guests of the evening had gone home and the ladies were preparing to abandon the parlor, Truscott himself appeared at

the doorway. Her ladyship was at the moment indulging in some slight refreshment in the dining-room. He held a large despatch envelope in his hand. "Miss Pelham, you desired me to let you know when I had opportunity of sending word to the valley. It seems that the sergeant is to start at daybreak to ride in search of Captain Canker's command, and I am sending a few lines by him. He will be glad to take anything you have."

"To Captain Canker's command? Thank you, Mr. Truscott. I do not know of any one with him. It was to father I wanted to write."

"Oh, pardon me," said Jack. "I'm sorry, but the sergeant will cross the valley way to the north of the post, and won't be apt to see any one from there. I thought it possible you might wish to send a message after some friends in the field column."

"I believe not," she answered. "Who is there with him to whom I owe a message?" she asked, laughingly.

"I can simply answer for it that there are six or eight who would be most happy to receive one," said he, with an odd relapse into his regimental manner of somewhat stately courtesy. "May I be the transmitter?"

"Evidently he is thinking of Mr. Glenham," said Grace to herself, and a strange shade of annoyance swept over her. His change of manner too struck her at once.

"Is it the customary thing in Arizona for us non-combatants to send sustaining and encouraging messages to the front?" she coolly inquired. "If so, put

me down for anything that may occur to you as at once brilliant and to the point. Mr. Truscott, that smile is satirical, and you plainly mean to indicate that *then* it would be recognized at once as not my message."

"Miss Pelham, I am no match for such acuteness. Are you repenting having shown mercy half an hour ago?"

"Not quite, but that very superior smile is an aggravation, I confess. Now, who is there to whom you supposed I wanted to send a message? Answer that."

"Let me answer by saying that Messrs. Glenham, Hunter, and Dana are by this time with Captain Canker, and that Mr. Ray with his company will have joined him to-morrow. I name them as young gentlemen any one of whom would be charmed by a message from you, and two of them I have heard absolutely raving about you."

"Now you expect me to ask which two, do you not? But I decline. Mr. Ray I never met until three days ago, though I have heard of him, and have wanted to know him ever since father joined the —th. The others I knew when they were cadets. Mr. Hunter has already distinguished himself. Has Mr. Glenham been engaged?"

"Is not that a matter on which your own sex would be better informed than I?" he asked, wilfully and mischievously.

She replied almost coldly.

"The question is utterly unworthy of you, Mr. Truscott. I mean, and you know I mean, to ask has Mr. Glenham been in action?"

"She must know perfectly well whether he has or not," thought Jack, but gravely replied, "No. Glenham says that it is his ill luck. He has had a few scouts, but the Indians have kept out of his way as yet. My note is to him. You might inspire him."

"And Mr. Ray?" she queried.

"Mr. Ray is a hero of many engagements, martial and matrimonial, and I am bound to say that it isn't his fault that he has escaped with so little danger. He has received more recommendations for brevets for the one and more 'mittens' for the other than any man in the regiment. I testify to the first as custodian of the records, to the second on his own frank statements. Ray says that he has been refused at least once a year ever since he graduated."

"Mr. Ray is unusually candid. Is it to him you suggest my sending a message?"

"I do not presume to suggest anybody. You desired to be informed when I had a chance of sending a messenger to 'the valley,' and I was so much in error as to fancy that you might want to send a message to some one in the command. Then my sympathies being with the possible recipient made me obtrusive. I really beg pardon, Miss Pelham."

Stepping to the door he quickly summoned the sergeant, handed him the package, "Give it to Lieutenant Glenham," he said, and then returning to her with a quiet smile on his face, "So it goes without a pleasant word for him after all, Miss Pelham."

"Certainly," said Grace. "Mr. Glenham would be surprised, to say the least, at receiving any message from me."

For an instant, only an instant, an expression of pain, even incredulity, shot across his face. Brief as it was, looking steadfastly into his eyes, she saw it and it stung her. But he recovered himself and promptly, pleasantly spoke.

"Then it seems that I have twice to ask pardon. I'm glad my first offence did *not* offend, and shall strive to make amends for my second."

What Grace would have said cannot be told. Once again there suddenly appeared before them her ladyship, re-entering from the dining-room with her hostess. Once again the measured tones of her voice broke in upon their interview. "Well, Mr. Truscott, I thought you left us two hours ago to seek repose?"

"I did, Mrs. Pelham," replied the adjutant, with calm civility, "and found it." And then, apparently inviting further remark, he stood looking seriously down into her flushed features. She began to hate him from that minute, but then it was the most natural thing in the world that she should do so.

At that instant there came a knock at the front door, and a servant handed in a note. "For Lieutenant Truscott," he said, "and there is no answer."

"Why, Jack," said the general's wife in her straightforward innocence of all possible harm, "that's Mrs. Tanner's writing. What is she sending for at this time of night? I hope Rosalie isn't sick. She can't have bad news either. What is it?"

"With your permission, then, I'll open it," said he; and with Mrs. Pelham's eyes glaring upon him he calmly glanced over the lines. "Nothing wrong," he continued. "She merely writes to thank me for send-

ing word of Tanner's detention at the agency." And yet madame could have sworn that where the strong light from the hall-lamp fell upon the page in his hand she distinctly saw the words, "God bless you, dear Jack." And so she did.

For three days after this event the confinement and monotony of his life would have told on a man stronger than Truscott. No news came from Canker's command, no especial tidings from Sandy. He had much fever, and was confined to his room many hours each day. When he did appear Grace was not visible. His hostess brought kind inquiries from her each day, and he frequently heard her blithe voice in the hall or mingling in the hum of conversation in the parlor. On the third day, while the doctor was dressing his shoulder and congratulating him upon a release from confinement that morning, his hostess, who had been unremitting in her care of and attentions to her favorite subaltern, came to the door to ask the doctor if she could not take Mr. Truscott in town for a drive. Receiving his permission, she was off in a moment, and presently came back delighted. "Jack," she whispered, "I am going to take Grace, too. Her ladyship is out of the way, and Grace has just got back from band practice. Ain't we in luck?"

Truscott expressed due enthusiasm, and in a few minutes the trio were bowling along the smooth road to Prescott. The bracing air, the bright sunshine, the rapid motion, perhaps too the very sweet face and dainty form of Grace Pelham seated so near him, all tended to bring brightness to his eye and color to his wan cheek. Looking critically at him as he sat opposite

her, conversing with her *chaperon*, Grace decided that he was an undeniably handsome man. But he spoke very little to or with her, and this seemed odd to the general's lady. Match-makers as her sex are by every instinct of their being, she had already determined that here was the very girl she wanted to see married to her friend. Rumors of Glenham's devotion had of course reached her, but she had virtually scouted all ideas of the kind. Her ladyship, Mrs. Pelham, had twice or thrice waxed confidential and shown an inclination to speak of him and of Grace in conjunction, so had other women, but the lady would not listen. "Don't mention him in the same breath," she exclaimed to Mrs. Wickham and to Mrs. Wilkins, to the latter's huge delight. "She has more brains in her little finger than he in his whole good-natured head."

Somebody went so far as to say that she had pitched into her husband, the general himself, for inviting Glenham to dine with them *en famille* before the ball. "It's as good as giving her dead away, and I don't believe she likes it at all," was what she did say, and the chief had absolved himself by explaining that Mrs. Pelham herself had requested it. This had mollified madame to a certain extent, but increased the dislike she had already begun to feel for that lady.

She was determined to bring them together, and so, on arriving in town, had bounced out of the Concord wagon (which answered all her purposes as well as a landau) and saying she merely wanted to look in at two or three shops, had precipitated upon her unprepared companions a *tête-à-tête* which neither had ex-

pected and yet to which each was by no means disinclined.

From all that he had heard, Truscott had been led to suppose that, if not actually engaged, it was more than probable that Miss Pelham and his friend very soon would be. Consequently, when he confronted her the morning after the ball, her face bathed in tears, just having parted from her lover as he set forth on his hurried, probably dangerous duty, Truscott had many reasons for supposing that the rumors were true, and that it was not altogether a loveless match, as the ladies would have made it, on her part. Else why should she have been so distressed at parting? He had been unfeignedly glad to believe she did care so much for him. He knew well how Glenham loved her, though the subject had never been mentioned between them. Glenham, indeed, had more than once given shy indication that he would not mind confiding the whole story of his hopes and fears to his friend, but Truscott never invited confidences and preferred not to be made a recipient in this case. Everything Grace said or did attracted him from the first moment of their meeting up to the time of his sending that letter to Glenham. He liked, admired, and was beginning to feel a warm interest in her, when she calmly looked him in the face and said, "Mr. Glenham would be surprised at receiving any message from me." "It was all very well in her to decline sending a message," thought Jack, "but why should she attempt to—why should she desire to deceive me? It's none of my business, of course; but it isn't what I had hoped for Glenham."

As for Grace. We have seen that she did not care for Glenham, and was distressed by his avowal. No woman wants to be considered attached to a man for whom she feels nothing more than a friendly interest. She saw in Jack Truscott a knightly soldier. She had heard of him for two years as the model officer of the regiment, her father's stand-by and stanchest friend, and when she met him he was bleeding from a recent fray in which all knew he had borne himself most gallantly. She saw him, even in his fatigue and suffering, gentle, patient, courteous. She heard of his bitter grief in the loss of his favorite horse, and, thorough horsewoman herself, she had warmly sympathized with him in that sorrow. She had been able to serve him in his anxiety and loneliness the very day of their first meeting—then—then she had been made to suffer on his account, to bear her mother's injustice because of her interest in him, and then—and now—he believed her engaged to or in love with Arthur Glenham.

Given these conditions and a heart absolutely free before, a somewhat romantic streak somewhere in her composition, and an enthusiastic love for all that was soldierly and knightly in man, it must be admitted that it only needed the strenuous opposition of parents or circumstances to render any woman liable to fall in love. And now Grace Pelham was being opposed in what she deemed a perfectly proper and justifiable interest in Mr. Truscott. She was being reminded in every look from the maternal eye that she was expected to concentrate her thoughts on Mr. Arthur Glenham. She—— Oh, well, why dissect the situation further? She probably would have indignantly repudiated the

idea that already she was falling in love. Far be it from the writer to assert anything of the kind, but one thing is certain: she did not want him to think her engaged to or in love with his friend, Mr. Glenham, and was worried and perturbed in spirit that he evidently did think so. More than that, she had begun to read him well enough to realize that he considered her virtual denial of Glenham as disingenuous, and this stung her to the quick. Now she had an opportunity of talking uninterruptedly with him, but how was she to introduce such a subject? Time was short. It was he who broke the silence.

"You have not been riding since I came, Miss Pelham. When am I to have the pleasure of seeing you in the saddle?"

"Indeed I don't know. Everything was broken up by the regiment's rush to the field. We have been so anxious I have hardly cared to ride, and—shall I be humble and confess it?—nobody has asked me since the ball. Don't the staff or infantry officers ride?"

"Some of the youngsters do, very well," said Truscott. "Possibly 'mounts' are not to be had."

"But Mr. Glenham rode a very nice horse, and we were to have gone again day before yesterday," she said, "and he told me that both the horses we used were regimental horses."

"They are off in the Mogollon range somewhere by this time, but when you get down to Sandy you shall ride all you can desire. We have just the very nicest kind of a 'mount' for you there, a quick, nimble little bay full of style and action, plenty of fire, too, and I do not believe a horse at Sandy can catch him. Glen-

ham wants to buy him provided the company commander will part with him."

"To whose company does he belong?"

"Captain Tanner's," answered Truscott. "You will easily win him over to your cause, for he worships a woman who rides well."

"Then Mrs. Tanner must want to keep the horse; she rides, of course?"

"No, Mrs. Tanner never rides. It is one of the sorrows of her life, I think; she gave up all attempts some years ago."

"What a pity! An army woman who cannot ride loses half the joy of being in the cavalry; but, does no one besides Mr. Glenham ride the horse you speak of?"

"A trumpeter boy of Tanner's troop ordinarily, and Tanner won't let the ladies at Sandy ride him at all; their hands are too uncertain, he says. As for Glenham or any of our heavy weights, he would not permit it."

"Then how did you and Mr. Glenham decide he would be just the mount for me?"

"Ray did that, I believe; he doesn't ride over a hundred and forty, and has a very light hand, light as any girl's on the bit, and Tanner would let him have his whole stable. When your coming was first announced, and the young officers commenced telling of your riding at the Point, they decided on having a suitable horse for you. Ray came up from Cameron on a scout, and he picked out 'Ranger,' and last week Glenham was in despair because there was no suitable side-saddle, and the colonel said it would be some time before yours could arrive."

("Always 'Glenham' or 'they, the young officers,'" thought Grace. "Am I so far beneath him that he could not afford to take any part in these preparations?")

"You have never ridden 'Ranger' yourself, then, Mr. Truscott?"

"Three or four times, possibly, just to try him and teach him a little better manners than he would be apt to learn from his ordinary rider, the trumpeter."

"Will he stand the skirt, do you think? That seems to be the great objection at first to a spirited horse."

"Very well; he has been practised with a trailing blanket and then with Mrs. Tanner's old skirt."

"And Captain Tanner—or was it the young officers, as you say, who took all these precautions in my behalf? Pray whom am I to thank?"

"Nobody, Miss Pelham. They all look upon a young lady who would resign the sweets of civilization to come out to us as a being for whom no degree of devotion can be too great."

"Now, Mr. Truscott, that is all very gratifying, too good to be true, perhaps, and I mean to cross-examine you a moment. You say 'they all,' referring, I suppose, to the 'young officers' aforementioned. Now tell me to whom you refer; I had been led to suppose that of the four companies at Sandy, Mr. Glenham, Mr. Crane, and Mr. Carroll were the only young officers, the other lieutenants being on leave or staff duty, or detached in some way, or like Mr. Wilkins, married and settled down; and Mr. Crane being neither young in years nor exhibiting anything like the faintest de-

sire to make my acquaintance, the number seems limited. *Who were they?*"

Truscott laughed merrily, and looked frankly down into the bright face before him. "You are too analytical," he said. "I shall have to stop and consider the weight of every word when talking with you. You see I included Ray, Hunter, and Dana in the list with Glenham, because they all took a hand when at the post."

"Which must have been very seldom, if at all, for Mr. Hunter and Mr. Dana both told me they never got a chance to come to headquarters, and were so eager to do so."

"Undoubtedly they are now," said Truscott; "but they looked upon it as purgatorial before."

"Still you don't answer my question, and you compel me to riddle your statements. It finally must be reduced to the melancholy fact that Mr. Glenham was the only one at Sandy who took an interest in my coming. I am not exacting. I had looked for nothing of the kind, but when you say 'all the young officers,' and allude to such numbers being engrossed in preparation, you must admit my right to disappointment either in them or my informant when I find there is only one. Furthermore, you have not once had the grace to confess yourself one of the interested."

"That would simply have been presumption. I alluded to the young officers."

"And Mr. Ray, who graduated but one year behind you, and is said to be one year older, why include him and exclude yourself, unless truth compelled you to the admission that you had no earthly interest in the

matter? Mr. Truscott, you have taught me a lesson, but you leave me in no further doubt. It is evident that I am to thank Mr. Glenham for all the training of my horse (O Grace, what a subterfuge!), and that the others were merely accidentally interested."

"Miss Pelham, you overwhelm me with the consciousness of my neglect. Glenham has so devoted himself to the matter that no efforts of mine could have competed with his, and yet, I assure you, he will require no thanks other than your pleasure in the general result."

Grace Pelham was ready to stamp her pretty foot at this juncture. Anything or anybody so utterly imperturbable as her new acquaintance she had never met. She shrewdly suspected that poor Glenham had never so much as attempted to mount the new horse, and that it being Mrs. Tanner's skirt that was employed, Jack Truscott himself had taken charge of that part of the lessons. Womanlike, she longed to extract the admission from his lips, but he would admit nothing. Then came their jolly hostess, bundle-laden, and then, to her dismay, Mrs. Wilkins with a party of friends from the post, in a vehicle similar to their own.

Truscott removed his forage-cap in salutation, and Mrs. Wilkins's unmodulated tones straightway filled the plaza. "Is it you, Mr. Truscott, and you, Miss Gracie?" ("Confound the woman!" thought Jack, savagely biting his moustache, "how dare she call her that?") "Faith, I thought it was time you were getting him out in the air. You look like a ghost; have you any news from the boys, pray? It's time we were hearing from them, I'm sure. How is your

mother, Miss Pelham? I'd call to see her, but I never feel like talking when the regiment is out scouting" (here Grace's eyes sought Truscott's, and found them brimming over with merriment. They had some thoughts in common, then), "but I'll be over to-night or to-morrow; you and he won't miss me, I'll be bound. Go on, driver. Good-by all!" And off she rattled, triumphant.

"Jack Truscott," said their matron, impressively, "do you know what I would do with that woman if she were in my regiment, if I had one? I'd appoint a day for prayer and humiliation, and—— What are you laughing at? You know you detest the ground she walks on."

"Being Arizona soil, there is no harm in that, madame; but were harm to come to Mrs. Wilkins the spice of life at Sandy would be snatched away. To me she is invaluable."

Bowling briskly along the smooth, hard road, they were soon again within the limits of the military settlement and in sight of headquarters. Grace Pelham, baffled in her effort to extract from Mr. Truscott some admission that he had been instrumental in the training of her horse, and feeling vaguely that she had not succeeded in penetrating the armor of reserve with which he was surrounded, determined on a final sally.

Turning to the general's wife, she broke forth,—

"Mr. Truscott has mystified me completely. He tells me of a capital horse awaiting me at Sandy, and endeavors to make me believe that a number of young officers, as he calls them, have had him in training for some time."

"Young officers, indeed!" burst in her friend. "When I was there with the general, three weeks ago, the *young* officers were watching Mr. Jack Truscott himself. He was cavorting round on that very bay, with somebody's old skirt, or a blanket, almost every day."

Grace had won her point, but had no time for remarks on the subject. The ambulance whirled up to the general's quarters, and there on the piazza stood Mrs. Pelham with her hands full of letters.

"Mail for everybody but me," she remarked, as the ladies, scoffing at the idea of accepting assistance from a one-armed man, sprang out, and then jocularly offered to assist Mr. Truscott. "Grace, you will want to run and read yours at once, I know." And she ostentatiously handed a little note to her. "These, madame, are yours." And their hostess turned away to peer into the envelopes of her letters and wonder who could have written them. Then Mrs. Pelham turned to Truscott with a small packet of letters, "And these for you. I know *that* handwriting to be Ralph's; would you mind opening it at once and letting me know how he is?"

The topmost letter in Truscott's package was post-marked San Francisco, and addressed in a dashing, bold hand. He recognized it at once as coming from Ralph Pelham, his colonel's second son; and, with Mrs. Pelham's eyes eagerly searching his face, he slowly opened and commenced to read. He had never received a line from young Pelham before in his life, and, though knowing him well, was surprised at the mere sight of a letter from him. Even as he opened

the envelope he noted the keen anxiety in Mrs. Pelham's face, and it put him on his guard. The first line was enough to test his nerve, but he glanced down the page, coolly turned the leaf and read the next, then very gently and courteously addressed her ladyship: "He seems in capital health, madame. You were not anxious about it, I hope?"

"Who, mother?" asked Grace, rejoining them at this moment and fearing that her father was spoken of.

"Merely a—not your father, Grace, so you need not worry. He is perfectly well, as this letter will show you," replied madame, hurriedly.

Grace took the letter her mother handed her, and with one glance in Truscott's face, a look in which inquiry was blended with surprise, turned and left them.

"Mr. Truscott," said Mrs. Pelham the instant they were again alone, "I did not know Ralph wrote to you. He—he has been somewhat wild at times, and I fully expected a letter from him to-day, but the letter is to you. His father is very anxious about him, and only yesterday wrote me that he wished Ralph were here again instead of in San Francisco. The colonel says you had so good an influence over him. Mr. Truscott, tell me if anything has gone wrong with my boy."

And Jack Truscott, looking steadily down in the anxious face before him, replied,—

"Nothing that I know of, and nothing shall that I can avert. This letter is about a matter of business in which I am interested. You should see the letter, but it concerns others besides myself." And Lady

Pelham, relieved in mind yet vaguely feeling that something might be extracted by dexterous cross-questioning, was compelled to drop the subject. She thanked him somewhat hesitatingly, looked as though she longed to ask still more, but drew aside and watched him as, with a grave bow, he entered the hall and went to his own room.

There Truscott seated himself by the window, and this time slowly read the following letter :

“SAN FRANCISCO, November 15.

“TRUSCOTT,—Just what you warned me against has come to pass. You made me promise that if I got into the scrape I would write at once and let you know. God knows I don't know another soul to whom to turn. It is for five hundred dollars this time, and I've given my note at thirty days. You see, they know my people, feel sure of their money, and would rather have the interest on it than the cash. But they don't know what I know,—that father is drained dry ; that Grace's outfit the mother insisted on her having and this tremendous pull of a journey have strapped him completely. Four months ago he wrote me sadly enough not to draw for a cent, and things were booming then. I had been doing first-rate. Consolidated Virginia brought me in eight hundred dollars in a week. To be sure, Best and Belcher knocked most of it out of me, but the other fellows in the office were wild over the New Nevada, and, Jack, I raised the money for the margins, and it's gone—utterly gone.

“What am I to do ? Why do you wish me to write you ? I cannot meet this. I see nothing for it but a

bullet or a bolt to the mines, where I can change my name with my shirt and hire out as a day laborer. The brokers will show me up to the firm and the situation be swept from under me instanter.

"If you mean that you can get Glenham to let me have five hundred dollars at once to meet my note I will give you my word to stick to my desk, to live *en retraite*, and not to speculate or gamble a cent until it is paid. Glenham has two or three thousand idle in the bank here I know; but, my God, I can't ask *him* for money, and hardly know him at all. But father must not know, and above all Grace. She would scorn me if she knew I had accepted a cent from him, and she is right. Yet it is that or ruin, Truscott, and—you helped me when I was in Arizona last year—for God's sake, for father's sake, who trusts you so, keep my secret, and if you see a way to help me, believe in my resolution. Wire or write at once.

"Yours,

RALPH PELHAM."

'Truscott sat with pale, stern features, his eyes fixed on vacancy, the letter resting on his knee. He heard the voices of the ladies in the hall, the rustle of feminine skirts past his door, the tinkle of the luncheon-bell, but he did not stir. A year previous Ralph Pelham had spent a month in Arizona with his father, had been thrown frequently into Truscott's society, and had soon learned to look up to him in every way. Pelham was only twenty-two, full of spirit and buoyant with hope, a handsome, cheery, reckless fellow, who had all the attributes of a mother's darling and a father's torment. The colonel loved his boy, but shrank from

exercising much control over his movements. He knew the youngster had his full share of youthful frivolity, had cheerfully paid his boyish debts, and had shaken his head at some college extravagances; but Ralph was the "brightest" of his sons, every one said, and beyond doubt the most indulged. A very good position had been secured for him in a business house in San Francisco, his salary was fair, his prospects fairer, and all had promised well. Truscott, however, had heard from the boy's own lips in the confidence resulting from an escapade of the previous year that he had, in common with other young men in his station in life, a mania for getting rich in a hurry and without the equivalent of labor. The fever of speculation was raging all over the Pacific coast. Fortunes were being made every week and lost every day. During a brief stay there Ralph Pelham had fallen in with some acquaintances whose haunt was Montgomery Street, had tried his luck on "margins," and with ease and astonishment had realized a few hundred dollars,—just enough to inspire him with wild visions of wealth and grandeur, and to send him on his way to visit his father with an unaccustomed plethora of funds, and a concomitant inflation of conceit and business airs that vastly entertained the officers of the —th. The money was soon spent and lost; more was needed, for Truscott found his young friend deep in the toils of "draw-poker" on returning to Sandy from court-martial duty. The colonel had just advanced the boy a quarter's allowance, and he dared ask for no more, and Truscott insisted on becoming his banker. "I make no conditions whatever, Pelham," he said, "but, don't play with those fellows,

unless you really want to throw money away." And Pelham had played no more at Sandy, where the scouts, the quartermaster's employés, the traders, and occasionally one or two of the officers were to be found in the nightly game down at the store. But this strengthened his trust in Jack, and steadied him a great deal, and before he left he manfully told his father of the circumstance, begging him not to show Truscott that he knew it, and the old soldier had forgiven his young prodigal, provided him with money for his return to San Francisco, and Truscott suspected that the truth was known, because of the fatherly way his colonel had of speaking to him for some time after, but they never alluded to the matter.

And now young Pelham was in a far more serious difficulty. Truscott read those lines again.

"And above all Grace. She would scorn me if she knew I had accepted a cent from him, and she is right."

"Then Ralph, too, was certain there was an understanding or something like it between his sister and Glenham," mused Truscott, and again the worn, tired look settled on his brow, and as he mused there came along the hall the quick, light step he was growing to know so well, the rustle of skirts that sent already a thrill to his heart, a light tap on his door; he sprang up, dashed his hand across his forehead, thrust the letter in the breast-pocket of his blouse, and strode to the doorway. There stood Grace with a tiny tray in her hands, a light luncheon and a cup of fragrant tea thereon.

"We thought you too tired perhaps, or too busy, to

come to the dining-room, so I was sent with this," she said, smiling brightly. He bent and took the tray from her hands and placed it on the table in the room, thanking her as he did so, and stepping quickly back to her side.

"I brought it myself," she continued, smiling archly and mischievously, "in partial payment of a kindness and attention you would not confess. It was you who trained my horse, sir, and you strove to conceal the fact. Mr. Truscott, I don't know how to thank you."

The frank, glorious eyes were gazing up into his; the sweet, mobile features, all smiles and sunshine, were turned towards him, her soft white hand toying with the fringe of the Indian tobacco-pouch that hung on the door-post. It was long since Truscott had looked upon a vision half so fair, and, despite himself, look he did earnestly, seeing which her eyes fell, a quick flush rose to her white forehead, she turned to go, but he recovered himself.

"Don't attempt to thank me," he said. "Ride with me once or twice when we get to Sandy, and I will be more than repaid."

"Ride with you! Indeed I will—gladly." And with that she was gone.

Truscott stood gazing after her as she disappeared through the parlor doorway. There she had glanced quickly back: their eyes had met, she smiled brightly, but never stopped. For a full minute he stood there, then with a half-stifled sigh rising to his lips he turned to re-enter the room, when a white object on the floor at his feet caught his eye. He bent, picked it up, and bore it to the light. It was a dainty handkerchief,

and in one corner was embroidered the simple name "Grace."

With bowed head he stood a few moments holding it in his hand, thinking intently, his eyes fixed upon the name. Then he took Ralph's letter from his pocket, read it once again, and softly repeated to himself the closing words, "For God's sake, for father's sake, who trusts you so, keep my secret, and if you see a way to help me, believe in my resolution."

"For God's sake, for father's sake. Yes," he whispered, "for Grace's sake I'll help you, and then—and then—may God help me."

And when Ralph Pelham's letter was replaced in the breast-pocket of Truscott's uniform his sister's handkerchief lay between it and the wearer's heart.

CHAPTER IX.

'SHE is no more engaged to him than I am, Jack Truscott, and you may take my word for it. More than that, it is my belief she has no interest in him whatever,—never has had, and that all the talk of this match is due to Lady Pelham's manœuvring. The wish is mother to the thought.'

So spoke the general's wife the evening of the drive, and Truscott listened with outward calm, but with emotions far from placid. He had not seen Grace since their brief conversation, and, the ladies being out at tea, had spent several lonely hours. During the afternoon, however, he had visited the telegraph-office, and a despatch worded as follows was already in the hands of his anxious correspondent in San Francisco :

"RALPH PELHAM, Occidental Hotel, San Francisco .

"Rely on Glenham. All fixed. Letter by mail.

"TRUSCOTT."

Now considering the fact that Glenham was miles away in the mountains, with no possibility of communication, it may be considered a piece of assumption on Truscott's part to make such positive use of his name. Truscott, however, though well knowing that his friend would be prompt to respond to any call he

might make upon him, had no intention of putting him to the test.

Some two years previous, after an extended consultation with some business friends in San Francisco, Truscott had placed his savings in the hands of a firm, one of whom he knew well and trusted. His wants were few in Arizona, his habits methodical, and from time to time he had added from his pay to the original amount. These were matters of which he never spoke to anybody, but the investment had proved moderately remunerative. The growing business of the firm led to further enterprises, and Jack's money, with his entire consent, had been devoted with other funds in their hands to the purchase of a mining claim in Nevada, which gave promise of a profitable yield when properly developed. Already the firm had sent three successive offers to Truscott to purchase his stock at a tempting "rise," but he had no need for money at the moment and decided that he preferred to hold on. The promise of the investment was quite as good as any other in which he could embark. Glenham for a while had placed ten times as much money in the hands of the same firm, but had declined to invest in the very purchase in which Truscott was interested. "I don't know enough about mining ventures to risk it," he said to Truscott, showing him the prospectus and the familiar letter-head of the firm. "What do you think of it, Jack?"

"If you have money you don't know what to do with, it might be put there as well as anywhere, but you know I never advise any one in a matter of this kind."

"Well, what would you do yourself?" persisted Glenham.

"I never had so much money at my disposal, but it seems to me that it is poor policy to take it from a safe though slow investment to put it where you may lose the whole lump in no time."

Glenham inferred that Truscott had no confidence in the new scheme, never dreamed that he had invested his all therein ("Why tell him?" thought Jack, "he will then be sure to go in full tilt, and if we are swamped hold me accountable"), and had concluded to try elsewhere; but the firm held, as Pelham had stated, a few thousand dollars of his money, and within a week from the receipt of Truscott's despatch young Ralph was relieved in mind by the arrival of a letter which, with one other, Truscott had written that very afternoon. It ran somewhat as follows:

"DEAR PELHAM,—On presentation of yourself and this note at Rundell, Stearns & Co. you will find five hundred dollars at your disposal. You know Stearns, I think: simply give him a receipt for the cash as voucher.

"Glenham is off on a hurried dash after Apaches, but the matter was easily arranged. I think it would be just as well *not* to write him any thanks, but to stick close to your work and resolution, and don't worry over the matter. Preaching is abhorrent to me, and experience, though expensive, a far better teacher.

"Your letter reached me by the hand of Mrs. Pelham herself, and excited her anxiety. I assured her you were well and in no trouble, as she imagined.

(Mental trouble was not allowed to count.) May I suggest that frequent letters to her or to Miss Pelham would be the easiest way of dispelling their anxiety and averting the possibility of cross-questioning me? No one should know of this transaction, and I can assure you that Glenham, who is a noble fellow, will not breathe it to a soul. My reasons for suggesting that you say nothing further to him are cogent, but too many for explanation here. Be guided by me, however, I will make all due acknowledgments.

“Were I to attempt to tell you of the sensation created by the arrival of Miss Pelham this letter would require extra postage, and I regard letters of that length as an imposition on friendship. The colonel is at Sandy. I am on escort duty with the ladies, and expect to join him next week. Yours sincerely,

“JOHN G. TRUSCOTT.”

This letter, as was stated, was posted with another addressed to his business friend in the city :

“FORT WHIPPLE, A. T., November 23, 18—.

“DEAR STEARNS,—Mr. Ralph Pelham will call upon you in person for five hundred dollars, which please pay him and charge to my account. If necessary, dispose of sufficient stock to cover it. Your voucher will be his receipt.

“I have reasons for preferring that he should regard this as coming from Mr. Glenham (who would not have to sell), and desire you to consider the affair as strictly confidential.

Very truly yours,

“JOHN G. TRUSCOTT.”

Late that night the ladies had returned from a quiet tea-party at Captain Lee's, Grace and her hostess enthusiastic over the lovely, winning ways of Mrs. Tanner, Lady Pelham, to their perplexity, maintaining on that subject an attitude of austere, even mysterious non-committalism (for which word the writer desires to apologize). Grace had been speedily summoned aloft by her mother, so that when Jack entered the parlor only his hostess was there.

"You ought to have been with us," she said. "Grace Pelham sang, and sang sweetly. See here, Jack Truscott, you need not be so sublimely indifferent to that young lady. I don't like it. I warrant you never saw many sweeter or brighter girls."

"I never saw any," replied he, briefly.

"Then why do you stand aloof, I'd like to know? One would suppose you had no appreciation of what was attractive in woman."

"My dear lady, is there not such a thing as having too much? What sense is there in losing one's head over a girl already bespoken?"

And then it was that his friend gave utterance to the words at the head of this chapter.

Overhead he could hear voices in colloquy; one, unmistakably that of her ladyship, was so loud and emphatic that an occasional word could be distinguished; the other, subdued and gentle, was indistinguishable. Evidently, too, the conversation was not placid. Mrs. Pelham's somewhat ponderous tread made the lightly-ouilt army-ceiling quiver and crackle as she paced rapidly to and fro.

"What in the world is she storming about to-night?"

said the lady. "I shall confide to you, Jack, that your colonel's wife strikes me as being a tartar."

A door overhead opened, closed, tones again became muffled, and Jack Truscott and his hostess sat staring in blank amazement in each other's face, for in the brief instant in which the chamber-door had been ajar her ladyship's voice, angry and unguarded, was distinctly audible to both,—to all in the house in fact.

"—and Mrs. Tanner is not a fit person for a daughter of mine to——" And here, in the language of the Congressional reporter, the hammer fell; to be literal, her ladyship banged the door.

For a minute the occupants of the parlor were aghast. Then Truscott calmly stepped to the hall-door and closed it.

"She may open the ports and fire another volley," he said, "and I don't care to hear her, even by accident."

"Well!" said his companion. "Listeners never hear any good of themselves; but I never expected to live to hear evil of Mrs. Tanner. She is my ideal of a perfect wife and mother. What do *you* think?"

"My acquaintance is not extensive," he replied, deliberately; "but in the army or out of it I know of no one truer, purer, or nobler. Now, if you will excuse me, I am going to bed. Good-night."

The next morning Grace did not appear at breakfast. "Had a headache," said her mother in response to inquiries. Soon afterwards, as Truscott started forth for a stroll with the doctor, she inquired if he intended going to the office, and requested him to post a letter.

"Do you happen to know where Mrs. Treadwell is stationed now, Mr. Truscott?" she asked.

"At Fort Hays, I think. Colonel Treadwell was in command there last month."

"Then this address is right," she remarked, handing him the letter and narrowly watching his features.

He glanced at the superscription, bowed in acquiescence, and turned away.

As a specimen of feminine ingenuity that letter deserves to take rank. This is a chapter of letters thus far. Here is her ladyship's:

"MY DEAR MRS. TREADWELL,—Though we have not met for years, I hold in warm remembrance the days when we were stationed together at Sedgwick, and the kindly relations which then existed" (which was more than the recipient of the letter could do, for she could not bear Mrs. Pelham). "I write in haste, and know well that you will be surprised at my writing at all; but duty as a mother compels me to appeal to you for information on a very delicate subject, and I trust you can relieve my mind. You may not have heard that Grace and I have recently 'joined' the —th here in Arizona, and naturally I am most anxious that she should be well guided in the selection of her friends and associates.

"Among the ladies who at first made a most favorable impression was Mrs. Tanner, whom, I am told, you knew well at Camp Phoenix. She seemed everything that was desirable, but I regret to have to say that *circumstances* have occurred which seriously affect my opinion of her, and among other stories which *late events* have revived is one that you at Camp Phoenix found her and Mr. Truscott alone in her parlor during

Captain Tanner's absence in the field, and saw them in a most indelicate and questionable a—well, I cannot write what was told me (in the strictest confidence); but knowing you as I do, a woman who never was known to say an unkind or a slanderous thing, it impressed me most painfully and powerfully to be told by ladies whom I believe in that you had positively made this statement. If it be true, I beg you to tell me *exactly* the truth; for Grace's sake I *must* know.

“The colonel, Captain Tanner, and all the officers are in the field except *Mr. Truscott, who is here, and she also*. You know he is still adjutant of the regiment, and Colonel Pelham must be in utter ignorance of this affair or he would not regard him as he does. Pray do not ask me for any particulars. Simply tell me what you know, and please consider this letter as inviolably confidential. I have no heart to write any news, for this wretched affair fills me with anxiety.

“Your attached friend,

“D. DE RUYTER PELHAM.”

And this was the letter Jack Truscott carried over to the office and dropped in the mail-box this bright November morning. A fortnight more and it was in Mrs. Treadwell's hands, and a constrained and reluctant answer was despatched to Arizona; but long before that reply could reach Mrs. Pelham at Sandy it was possible for the very complications to occur which she most ardently desired to frustrate. That very night there came a despatch from Colonel Pelham pronouncing the road safe and practicable, and the next morning Truscott was conveying the ladies of Camp Sandy, now

reinforced by Mrs. and Miss Pelham, down to the valley wherein lay their frontier home. Three large ambulances carried the party, a small guard of soldiers went along for appearance's sake, and without event of material importance the journey was safely effected, and Grace Pelham made her *début* at Camp Sandy, little dreaming of the months of mingled happiness and serene content, of doubt and utter misery, that lay before her.

CHAPTER X.

WITHOUT event of material importance, it has been said, the journey from Prescott to Sandy was effected. Yet the journey was not devoid of interest.

For two or three days previous Mr. Truscott had seen little or nothing of Grace Pelham. He had been stunned by the angry words that both he and the general's wife had overheard when Lady Pelham's door was opened for that one brief instant, he had pondered over them that night after going to bed, and the more he thought the more his blood boiled within him at the idea of this coarse, imperious woman daring to speak so shamefully of his gentle little friend. Next morning Grace did not appear at all, as we have seen, and it was all Truscott could do to behave with common civility to her ladyship. As for their hostess, it must be confessed that she absolutely snubbed Mrs. Pelham on two or three occasions, kept out of her way as much as possible, and when the time for starting came she kissed Miss Pelham warmly and affectionately, begged her to come up and spend the Christmas holidays with her, but not a word of invitation did she extend to her mother. "Good-by, Mrs. Pelham, I trust you have enjoyed your visit," was all she vouchsafed her ladyship, and that lady readily com-

prehended that she had offended her hostess, and, true to nature, hated her accordingly.

Only in company had Truscott met Miss Pelham since that night until the morning of their start. Then he suddenly encountered her alone, he returning from a visit to the corral to inspect the condition of the ambulances that were to convey the party to Sandy, she from the infantry quarters on the other side of the garrison, whither she had been to say good-by to a baby pet of hers, the daughter of one of the officers here stationed.

Truscott greeted her cordially and complimented her upon such very early rising. Her reply was a nervous and embarrassed platitude, and she hurried along with bent head and downcast eyes up the very path which she and Glenham had taken the night of the "Pelham Ball." All her old frank, bright manner had disappeared: she would not even look at him. Stung to the quick by her evident wish to avoid him, he presently raised his forage-cap, and turning at a side-path, said,—

"Pardon my not escorting you home, Miss Pelham; there are some matters I must arrange before we can start."

Then for an instant her eyes met his, she faltered when she marked the pain and surprise in his face. She almost held out her hand to him, but as though suddenly recollecting herself, simply bowed, said in a low tone something that sounded like "Good-b—morning, Mr.——" and scurried away up the path like a frightened fawn. With a sadder brow than we have yet seen in Truscott he turned aside, and by a

circuitous route regained the house, where he found them all at an early breakfast.

Half an hour afterwards and they were off. Mrs. and Miss Pelham and her ladyship's homesick maid occupying one ambulance, Mesdames Turner, Raymond, and Wilkins another, while Mrs. Tanner with Rosalie and one of the young ladies from Sandy were bestowed in a third,—Captain Tanner's own ; for Tanner was a man of substance, and had money enough to buy out the rest of the regiment, Glenham perhaps excepted. A fourth ambulance contained a small guard of infantry-men, while two or three troopers, left behind in the rush for the Apaches, the mail messenger, and two scouts, who had come in with despatches, accompanied the party as escort.

Amid the fluttering of handkerchiefs and cheery *au revoirs* the party rattled off, cracking whips and whistling drivers sending the lively little mule-teams along at a spanking gait. Truscott paused one moment to hold out both hands to his kind hostess and with something of a tremor in his voice to say farewell. She looked up in his face and seized the outstretched hands,—"Jack, don't you worry. *It'll come out all right yet, and I know it.*" He turned quickly, mounted his horse, and, with a wave of the hand, cantered off down the slope after his convoy.

The journey to the Agua Fria was accomplished without incident. It was a dismal party that rode in her ladyship's vehicle. She was in execrable humor herself, ready to snap at anybody. As a consequence Grace sat silently and wistfully gazing out on the pine-covered heights the maid was in tears most of the way,

and Lady Pelham, echoing the sniffing from the front seat, sniffed at her smelling-salts, and finally inquired for the sherry-flask. Twice or thrice at difficult parts of the road Grace saw Truscott, seated on his horse, cautioning the driver of each ambulance as in turn they came to the spot, but ordinarily he was well to the front, and only at sharp curves of the road could she catch sight of him, the guard ambulance being just in front of them. Then she looked with all her eyes, for well as he looked at all times it was in the saddle Jack Truscott was at his best. She worshipped fine horsemanship, and never had she seen anything to equal the grace and ease of Truscott's. Half angry at herself, she yet could not withstand the fascination that kept her gaze fixed upon him at every opportunity.

Before the sun reached the meridian Truscott conducted his train into the court of Olson's ranch, and politely notified her ladyship that here they would rest an hour and then push on. The ladies were assisted from the ambulances, and were welcomed with much red-faced embarrassment by Mrs. Olson, who showed them into her best rooms. The ladies of the —th she knew well. They had often stopped with her, but the stony grandeur with which her ladyship glared around the bare walls and rude furniture, sniffing at everything, overawed and upset her completely. None the less did she hasten to sacrifice her pet chickens and produce the freshest eggs, in order that the ladies who were so grand in her eyes might be regaled with the best her larder could command.

Something like twenty minutes had the ladies been resting and chatting among themselves when Truscott

came striding up from the corrals, whither he had been to superintend the refreshment of his horses and mules. Seeing him approach, Mrs. Tanner quietly laid her sleeping Rosalie upon the bed, rose and went out to meet him. Two or three of the ladies exchanged glances, then looked at Mrs. Pelham. Taking Truscott's arm, Mrs. Tanner walked with him slowly through the ranch-yard, past the corrals, and, with the eyes of every woman in the party except Grace's upon them, they strolled up the bank of the stream, and were soon out of sight from the windows.

"Come with me a moment," said Mrs. Pelham, abruptly, to her daughter, who rose without a word and followed her mother out into the court and around the corner. The elder lady silently pointed up the stream, and Grace, looking, beheld Mrs. Tanner leaning on Truscott's arm, and both of them, some three hundred yards away, were walking farther. Another moment and they disappeared from sight around a little knoll.

Then Lady Pelham slowly turned, and impressively the words fell from her lips, "Grace, what did I tell you?"

When, half an hour later, Jack Truscott extended his hand to assist Miss Pelham to her seat in the ambulance, as he had been assisting the others, she passed it without notice, seized the door frames with both hands, and with the agile spring of the mountain deer popped up into her place. Truscott calmly closed and fastened the door, nodded to the driver, and away went the Pelham equipage.

The sun was setting behind the great range to the

west, and the ambulances had halted for a moment at a point where the road wound around a precipitous ledge, when Truscott rode up to the door of the Pelham equipage, and, pointing far down in the valley below and some miles to the south, quietly remarked, "Mrs. Pelham, there is Camp Sandy," then rode on to the head of column. Eagerly gazing, Grace could see rows of what looked like toy-houses painted a dismal brown, but Mrs. Pelham was cross and tired, and the sherry had been a little too strong or too frequent, or both, she did not care to look. An hour more and Grace was in her father's arms, while her gracious mother was turning up her nose at the parlor furniture. Soon afterwards, Grace, delightedly examining her own dainty little room, heard her father's voice hailing from the piazza below,—

"Truscott! oh, Truscott! that you?"

A voice from the darkness out on the parade replied,—

"Yes, colonel."

And Grace stood still—yes—to listen.

"Been to dinner or supper yet?"

"Not yet, sir; I've had several things to attend to."

"Then come and take high tea with us."

"I would with pleasure, sir, but—I've promised Mrs. Tanner."

A tap at Grace's door, and her ladyship swept in.

"You heard that, I suppose. How much confirmation do you require, may I ask?"

And all that evening Grace Pelham was feverishly gay.

The general, it seems, had gone out into the Mogollon

after the troops ; he had spent a day at the agency with Tanner, and then, on his renowned saddle-mule, had struck eastward for the trail leading to the Colorado Chiquito. Every hour the renegades were sneaking back into their limits, and the next day were begging around camp as persistently as ever and with that child-like expression of innocence and utter lack of guile in which the Apache excels. In the brief conversation Colonel Pelham had enjoyed with Truscott after tea, when the latter had betaken himself to the office and was working away by candle-light, the adjutant learned that the entire command was on its way back, having had only one or two unimportant brushes with the Indians, who had scattered all over the Territory on finding themselves pursued by so large a force. Then the colonel went back to his quarters to enjoy the unaccustomed luxury of the society of his wife and daughter ; but Truscott remained at his desk "straightening out" the regimental papers until long after midnight. Grace Pelham, going to her room after a long, loving talk with her father, had thrown open her window and stood there gazing out into the starlit night. Way across the dark parade she saw towards her right the dim lights of the guard-house. She knew it to be such, because, even as she gazed, there came from that point the prolonged call of the sentry, "Nu-umber One. Ha-lf pa-st twelve o'clock." Then way beyond, over towards the corrals, a shrill Hibernian tenor responded for Number Two, and added, "A-a-ll's w-ell !" and so the watch-call went the rounds, echoing back from the foot-hills until it again reached the guard-house. Grace thought it lovely. But what was that brilliant light

off to her left? She could make out the outlines of a low one-story building that seemed to stand by itself, and from two windows broad beams of light streamed forth and illuminated the parade. Hearing her father's step on the stairway, she called him in. "I'm so interested in it all, father; the sentries have just been calling off. Now that's the guard-house over there; but what is this bright light here to the left?"

The colonel peered over her shoulder. "That! It's the adjutant's office, and that confounded Jack Truscott is sitting up there at work when, with his shoulder, he ought to have been in bed long ago. By Jove, I'll go and send him!"

Then he turned, took her in his arms, and looked proudly, fondly, down into the sweet upraised face.

"I wonder if you dream, my little girl, what a joy it is to your old father to have you here? God bless and guard you, my child!" With that he kissed tenderly her white forehead, and the next minute she heard him tramping across the parade to the office. She was about to close her blind, when the sound of hoof-beats and voices coming into the garrison from the north attracted her attention. At rapid lope the riders came, and in a moment flashed into view in the lights from the adjutant's office. Then came her father's cheery voice,—

"Why, Ray, is that you? You, too, Glenham? Welcome back, boys!"

Then she heard Truscott's deep baritone and Ray's and Glenham's mingled greetings, and the "old fellows" and hearty slaps on back and shoulder with which the comrades of the frontier are wont to welcome one

another; and then she did close her blind, and for a while sat there in the darkness thinking, thinking.

Two days more and the entire command was once more in garrison. Rough, stubbly beards were shaven off, ragged hair trimmed to soldier style, scouting-rigs were stowed away, and on the following Sunday morning six fine troops of the —th formed line, mounted and in full dress, for inspection. The band, too, had returned from a visit to the southern posts of the Territory, and for three days the rank and file had been cleaning, polishing, and scrubbing generally, for "Old Catnip" was a stickler for drill, discipline, and neatness in every particular.

Much of the time the officers had been occupied superintending the overhauling of the barracks and stables, but such hours as Captain Canker would allow him Arthur Glenham had spent at Grace's side. *Was* it hope that fathered the thought, he wondered, or was she really more gracious, more encouraging in her manner towards him? Mrs. Pelham was everything that was delightful to him, inviting him there to tea, affording him frequent opportunity for uninterrupted interviews with Grace, and eagerly inquiring how soon Ranger would be ready for the promised rides. Tanner, too, had come in with his troop, and Ranger had been duly inspected and delightedly praised by Grace, but the captain preferred that she should not ride until after the general inspection. Of Truscott the ladies at Colonel Pelham's saw nothing except at a distance. He spent all his time at the office, and in going thither or returning to his quarters kept way out in the middle of the parade, for he lived at the extreme northern end of

officers' row, and the colonel's house was at the other end. Officers old and young and all the ladies had called to welcome the Pelhams to Sandy, but just as at Prescott, when Ray, Hunter and other ineligibles attempted to converse to any length with Grace, the "confounded old tabby" would swoop down upon them and monopolize the talk herself.

Oh, how superb the sight was to Grace when, early Sunday morning, the whole command appeared in full uniform, the martial-looking helmets with their long horse-hair plumes, the bright colors of the stripes and facings, the blue and gold and glittering sabres of the officers, and the handsome equipments of their steeds! She stood on the piazza watching it all,—officer after officer mounting in front of his quarters and trotting off to join his troop. (Of course, Glenham came down the line to exhibit himself and his beautiful horse to her before joining his captain.) Then the four stately non-commissioned officers, the guard of the standard, each with his war chevrons and his bronze medal for bravery, rode up in line and received their charge from her father's hands. Then came the stirring adjutant's call, and the thrilling burst of martial music from the band, and troop after troop rode steadily into line; and then from the right there came at full gallop a stalwart form she had grown to recognize instantly in any dress. The horsemanship was unmistakable, and still at full gallop on his powerful black charger he darted out to the front until midway to where the colonel sat on old "Rappahannock," when with sudden halt and wheel he reined about, and at the deep, ringing baritone, that resounded along the line, the sabres flashed in air, and,

again wheeling, his own sabre rose and was lowered in graceful salute. Grace Pelham gazed with all her eyes, eagerly interested in everything, but then the ladies who had seen that sort of thing a hundred times gathered around her, and she saw no more of the ceremony that so delighted her.

Disappointed as she was at the interruption of her view of the inspection, Grace found it hard work to be cordial and courteous to her visitors. Ordinarily on such occasions the ladies swarmed about Captain Turner's quarters, which, being opposite the centre of the line when formed, afforded the best point of observation. Mrs. Turner with great self-complacency used to attribute this gathering to her powers of entertainment and conversation, and talked and chattered like a magpie; but on this particular Sunday, seeing Grace alone on the piazza of the commanding officer's house, the meeting adjourned and proceeded *en masse* to entertain her with garrison platitudes, Mrs. Wilkins being by no means the least voluble. As a consequence, when the jovial colonel rode up to the piazza after the dismissal of the command, his face all aglow with the unaccustomed exercise, and called out in his cheery way, "Well, daughter, what do you think of the —th?" she replied, with an air of serio-comic disappointment, "I could see nothing of them, father, except (*sotto voce*) the ladies."

"Confound those women!" growled the colonel. "I might have known they would spoil the whole thing, and I particularly wanted you to see the regiment. Your mother isn't visible yet, I suppose. She never did care for anything connected with my profession

except the pay accounts," he added to himself, with a weary sigh. Then he and Grace went in to breakfast.

Late that afternoon two grimy-looking, shaggy-bearded men, accompanied by Mr. Truscott, appeared at the colonel's door, and were promptly ushered into the parlor, where Lady Pelham was yawning over a novel (for which the writer of this gives her full absolution) and her husband was snoozing on the lounge with a handkerchief over his face. In response to Truscott's courteous bow, her ladyship rose from her chair, stared for an instant at the uncouth-looking bipeds who stood uneasily at the door, then, with an indignant "Well, I declare!" and without noticing Truscott in the least, she swept majestically into the adjoining room, slamming the door behind her.

The colonel woke with a start, and for an instant gazed stupidly at his visitors.

"What's up, Truscott?" he asked.

"Fanshawe and Craig have come in to report, sir; they bring important news," replied the adjutant.

"Fanshawe, hey! Craig, too! Good! Sit down, boys. What news do you bring?"

The taller of the two cleared his throat, while the other, "his pardner," slowly twisted his old slouch hat in his hands and looked to his senior to do the talking. Wiping his face with a faded red bandanna, then stowing it away in the breast of his buckskin hunting-shirt, Fanshawe, with a voice like a cracked bassoon, began.

"We've treed 'em, colonel. There's three big ranch-erias out yet. We follered 'em down from nigh Cheylon's butte into the Tonto basin. There's two on 'em there somewhere, close in under the Black Mesa, nigh

the head o' the creek. The other band cut loose and seemed to go over to the Chiquito. Craig and I wanted to go in farther and find just where they were, but old Kwonahelka and Charley,—Washington Charley, you know, colonel; Araháwa 's his 'Patchie name,—they dasn't resk it; so we come back. If the gin'ral will send out a couple of troops now, with fifteen days' rations and 'Patchie-Mohave scouts, I reckon he can gobble the Tonto basin crowd, and it'll only take a small detachment to corral the outfit that slid out over towards the Chiquito; there can't be more'n forty bucks among 'em."

"Where are Kwonahelka and Charley?" asked the colonel, after a moment's thought.

"Right outside, sir," said Fanshawe. "We didn't like to bring 'em in."

The colonel nodded to Truscott, who quickly stepped into the hall and signed to the two Apache Indians squatting on the piazza. They silently rose and entered the house.

An exclamation of "Goodness!" caused Truscott to glance to the head of the stairs. There stood Grace, her eyes opened in wonderment. "What strange creatures are those, Mr. Truscott?" she asked.

"Apache scouts, Miss Pelham."

"Oh, *may* I come down and see them?"

"Most assuredly," he answered.

So down she came, pausing irresolutely at the door until her father, catching sight of her, called out, "Come in, come in, Grace. You've never seen our Apaches. Gentlemen," he continued, turning to Fanshawe and partner, "this is my daughter, just arrived

in Arizona." Whereat Fanshawe and partner arose in bewilderment and awkwardness and bobbed their heads, and grew redder under the bronze which desert suns and winds had painted on their faces.

Grace bowed and smiled a pleasant welcome, not knowing what to call them, and being quite uncertain as to whether she ought to shake hands or not.

"This will all interest Grace," said her father, at once. "Truscott, you explain the situation to her. Now I want to question these aborigines."

And so, despite herself, Grace was thrown into confidential relations with the man she had been trying to avoid, and yet—and yet—whom she had caught herself watching from her window, or gazing over at the midnight lights in his office, a dozen times in the last four days.

She colored, then turned and became absorbed in contemplation of the Indians, strange objects indeed to her. Their swarthy features, glittering, bead-like eyes; their coarse, matted black hair, for all the world like a Shetland pony's mane and forelock, falling in masses like an immense "bang" over their foreheads and down to the eyes in front, hanging in tangled clumps to the neck behind; their slender but sinewy legs and arms; their rude dress,—not an ornament or a patch of paint, things she supposed inseparable from the red warriors, no gracefully-draped blanket, no eagle's-feather war-bonnet, none of the accessories she had supposed were always to be seen with the Indians. But here were two noted men of their tribes,—Kwonahelka, a chief of the Apache-Mohaves; Araháwa, sub-chief and interpreter of the Apache-Yumas,—and dirty white cotton turbans,

shirts, and breech-clouts, with substantial moccasins, constituted their costume.

Araháwa had once been taken to Washington,—hence his nickname,—and having been kept some time at San Francisco, had picked up a little English, not unlike the “pidgin-English” of the Chinese. It was “Charley” whom the colonel was now questioning.

“But what I want to know is, whose bands are these down in the basin?” said he, impatiently.

“Mebbe so Deltchay; mebbe so ‘Skiminzin; no can tell,” replied Charley, volubly.

“Ask Kwonahelka; he knows,” said Fanshawe. So Charley and his associate held a brief confab, in which much gesticulation was used on both sides. Finally Charley turned.

“Kwonahelka he say ‘Skeltetsee by Mogeyone. ‘Skeltetsee got plenty Tonto.”

And so the strange colloquy went on, and Grace, her curiosity getting the better of her reserve, finally turned to the silent soldier by her side and inquired, “What *does* it all mean, Mr. Truscott?”

“Briefly this,” he replied, still keeping his eyes fixed on Charley. “There are still some hostile Apaches scattered over the country to the east of us, and these scouts were sent to discover their lair if possible. They have succeeded in tracing three of the bands, and have come in to report.”

“And what will be done now?” she anxiously inquired.

“Their report will be telegraphed to the general at Prescott, and then, probably, scouting-parties will be sent from here to hunt them to their holes and fight it out.”

Grace's face paled visibly. She was about to speak, when Glenham entered the room, and, barely glancing at the others, addressed himself to her,—

“Everything is ready now, Miss Gracie. Tanner has given me Ranger. Will you ride with me to-morrow?”

And as she answered, “Gladly, Mr. Glenham,” a close observer could have seen a contraction of the brows and a twitch of the muscles about Jack Truscott's stern, set mouth, but his eyes were fixed upon his colonel's face.

A moment more and that gentleman rose. “Well, that settles it,” he said. “Come to the office, Truscott, and bring them along.” And so Grace and Glenham were left alone.

That evening the colonel sent his orderly with his compliments to Captain Canker, and the information that he, Canker, should command at dress-parade. And taking Grace's arm in his as the adjutant's call sounded, and the companies came marching out to the line dismounted, he strode up beyond Turner's quarters, grimly declining the dozen invitations to “come and sit down on our piazza,” and led his daughter out beyond the chattering groups to a point in the parade whence she could witness the ceremony undisturbed. She gazed with pride and delight at the long solid line, the six companies standing at parade-rest as the band—a glorious band the old —th had in those days—“trooped” down the front and back to its place on the right. Then came the stirring “retreat” upon the trumpets, the roar of the evening gun, the fluttering folds of the great garrison flag to the ground as though its halliards were shot away; and then from the distant flank the

same deep, glorious voice rang along the line, and the tall, soldierly form came stalking out to the front. She could not take her eyes off him, but watched his every movement,—quick, agile, yet erect and stately. She marked the vehement contrast between his rich voice and Canker's reedy twang as the latter put the battalion through the manual; but when the officers closed on the centre, and some sixteen of them came marching to the front to the stirring music of "*En Avant*," and as one man saluted the commanding officer, she could not but see that in stature, carriage, grace, and dignity there was not his peer among them.

"Grace," said her father suddenly, "I've got the finest adjutant in the United States army, and he is as noble a man as he is a soldier." She looked up in surprise, for his voice trembled, and tears had started to his eyes. He had received a letter that day from Ralph and had not shown it to them, but he struck his cane sharply upon the stony ground, tossed his head, and was all joviality when, as though with one accord, the officers came crowding around Grace to welcome her to her first parade. All but one; Truscott went straight to his quarters.

CHAPTER XI.

SOON after guard-mounting on the following morning, Arthur Glenham, faultlessly attired, cantered down officers' row to Colonel Pelham's quarters, dismounted and gave his horse to the orderly. Almost at the same moment Captain Tanner's pigmy trumpeter appeared with Ranger, and it needed but half a glance to detect the fact that in that precious pair, boy and horse, the devil of mischief was abnormally developed. "Kid," as the boy was called by the entire command, had a rollicking Irish eye that twinkled with fun. Ranger was similarly provided with organs of sight that rolled restlessly about in their sockets, while his nervous legs and pawing hoofs, his incessantly tossing head, gave conclusive evidence that he was ripe for any devilment that chance might afford him. The Kid rolled off the bare back of his pet and saluted Glenham, with a half-suppressed grin on his freckled "mug." I crave pardon for the slang, but "face" could never apply to the broad, flattened mouth, the turned-up, utterly Hibernian nose, and the shock-headed appearance generally of the worst young scamp in the —th. His colonel, his captain, and the adjutant were the only men in the garrison to whom the Kid looked up with anything like awe, or even with great respect, and as he rolled his quid of tobacco over with his tongue and "stood to horse" as

he grinningly saluted Mr. Glenham, he presented small show of that deference expected from the rank and file towards a superior; perhaps he was thinking of the many five- and ten-dollar bills with which the lieutenant had accommodated him, and what an ass the lieutenant must be if he ever expected to get them back.

Grace had accepted the invitation to ride about five o'clock on the previous afternoon. Before tattoo, consequently, every lady along the row was duly informed of the fact, and as a matter of course all household duties were suspended as the horses came up, in order that the ladies aforesaid might see the mount and start. Even Mrs. Tanner was taking the air on her piazza, which was only two doors away from the colonel's, and Mesdames Raymond, Turner, and Wilkins had gathered around Mrs. Canker, who lived next door, and who was not ordinarily one of the society circle at the post, —a retiring disposition, an absolute indifference to anything or anybody except her husband and children, and rather plain, homely ways, rendering her "Well,—rather uninteresting, you know," as Mrs. Turner put it. A knot of officers had gathered some distance farther away.

Presently Grace appeared upon the colonel's piazza, and all eyes far and near were fixed upon her. "Heavens and earth!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilkins, "a chimney-pot hat in Arizona!"

In Arizona or out of it, 'twould be hard to find a lovelier picture than was Grace Pelham that morning. The short, jaunty silk hat with its mite of a veil, the stylish, perfectly-fitting New York habit, the dainty gauntlets, all combining to make a costume that set off

her exquisite face and slender form to admirable advantage. After her came a servant carrying her English saddle and bridle, which had arrived but a day or two before. And now came the onerous task of equipping Ranger. Grace could not bear the looks of the heavy, clumsy cavalry bit and bridle, and had decided to use her own from the start.

"Please have this put on him first, Mr. Glenham," she said. And obedient to her wish he took the dainty tan-colored bridle with its burnished steel bit and chains and signalled to the Kid to slip off Ranger's uncouth-looking head-gear, and then proceeded himself to replace it with the other. It is one thing to slip off a bridle, another to put one on. Ranger, accustomed only to the dingy regulation deformity, snorted suspiciously at the brilliant and novel-looking affair that Mr. Glenham was cautiously raising towards him; he eyed it askance, and then, notwithstanding the firm hold of the young officer's broad hand upon his forelock, Ranger threw up his head. This brought Glenham on tiptoe, increasing his difficulties and vexation.

"Come here, trumpeter," he called, "and hold his head down while I get the bridle on."

The Kid darted forward with unusual alacrity, and simultaneously Ranger started and commenced to back, dragging Glenham with him. The more rapidly the Kid approached the more did Ranger recede. The Kid made a spring as though to catch him, Ranger made a corresponding jump, shook free his head, then, with a most hilarious leap into mid-air, he let drive his heels at some imaginary foe, and, with a snort of malicious delight, dashed off around the parade, leaving

Glenham puffing, blowing, and discomfited, and the Kid grinning in malignant enjoyment of the catastrophe.

Poor Glenham! He ran back to the piazza, dropped the bridle at Grace's feet, and saying, "Please don't be impatient; I'll have him back in a minute," clambered into his saddle, and, striking both spurs into his horse, went sputtering off in pursuit.

The neighboring ladies instantly came to condole with Grace; the group of officers remained as they were, and, after the manner of their kind, indulging in hearty and pitiless laughter at poor Glenham's discomfiture, except Ray. Ray came running down to the party, now gathered on the colonel's piazza, and laughingly raising his cap to Grace, exclaimed, "Never mind, Miss Pelham, we'll soon have him back," then he turned on the Kid, who, with his hands in his pockets, was bending nearly double in the contortions he resorted to to keep him from roaring with laughter. But the look in the lieutenant's eye straightened him up in an instant. Out went the quid; out came the hands; together came the heels with a snap, and with a half-scared and demure countenance the Kid "stood attention."

Ray stepped close to the youngster, and in a low, savage tone spoke quickly, "You young whelp, you know perfectly well you drove that horse loose. Go at once to my sergeant, tell him to send two men out after Ranger, and you bring me my horse bareback quick as a flash. Off with you now!"

And the Kid, well knowing Mr. Ray's energetic way of dealing with his own black sheep, darted off full speed.

Meantime, Mr. Truscott was in his quarters at the other end of the row, changing from the full-dress uniform he wore at guard-mounting to the "undress" of the day. He was never known to whistle in his life, but he had a way of singing softly to himself as he dressed, sometimes as he wrote or worked, but of late no song had escaped his lips. To Glenham his manner had been more gentle and brotherly than ever, but there was none of the old familiar talk between them. Glenham spent his evenings at the colonel's, came home late, and found Jack in bed and, to all appearances, asleep, while during the day the latter was always at the office.

Very sad and pale looked Mr. Truscott as he slipped into his sack-coat; then the rush of hoofs burst upon his ear, and with a face suddenly blanched he sprang to the door. A sigh of relief, a fervent "Thank God!" escaped him as he caught sight of Ranger, unencumbered with either saddle or bridle, tearing out of the north gate, while Glenham came lumbering after.

"That d—d young Paddy scared him off!" he almost sobbed to Jack as he thundered by. Quickly mounting his own great charger, who was pulling excitedly away from the orderly, Truscott soon overtook Glenham down on the flats below. Ranger still far ahead and making for the foot-hills, where the herds were grazed during the day.

"He'll go right up that broad cooley, Glenham. You take this one to the left. I'll chase and drive him over towards you, then head him in towards the post, and we'll nab him at the stables."

With that he was off: his fresh, magnificent horse

sweeping way out to the right *beyond* Ranger's trail, and Glenham, implicitly obeying Jack's directions, plunged into the mouth of the narrow valley or ravine before him, and still urging his steed to his best efforts, was soon separated by the ridge to his right from all sight of the chase.

By this time Ranger, finding himself no longer closely pursued as he was in the garrison, condescended to hold up for a minute and look back on his trail. The horse and rider with whom he had been delightedly playing fast and loose for some five minutes had disappeared entirely, and that big black horse he had been so accustomed to following on battalion drill and the tall rider at whose voice he daily wheeled into column without waiting for pressure of leg or rein from his own little rascal of a rider,—why, *they* were riding *away* from him! And in genuine equine surprise and disappointment he gazed after them. It was more than he could stand, and in another moment, with a piteous neigh, he galloped off in pursuit. This being precisely what Truscott expected, he slackened his pace and reigned slightly to the left; next he dove into a little ravine, and here dismounting and drawing the reins over his horse's head, he calmly lay down on the turf, and his steed went to cropping the scant herbage. A minute more and Ranger, with another eager neigh, reached the bank, and catching sight of his comrades, stopped short, then gingerly trotted down close to them, as though to inquire what the mischief they meant by trying to avoid him in that unfriendly way. Then, as neither Truscott nor his horse took the faintest notice of him, he lounged up alongside his brother quadruped

and, sniffing for a moment at his nostrils, set his ears back and aimed a vicious little snap at his nose. With his back to the pair, Truscott slowly and indifferently arose, and, drawing in his rein, raised the black's head and brought him close to his right side, quietly patting his head and neck. Ranger followed as before, bent his head to sniff again at the nostrils of the black, and found his forelock held in the iron grasp of the half-concealed biped, who had reached quietly over the black's neck and nabbed him.

Then Truscott mounted, and, firmly holding his prize on the off side, rode slowly back towards the garrison. One of Ray's men with a lariat met him half-way in. Truscott knotted the rope carefully about Ranger's neck, sent the man up the ravine to recall Glenham, and continued on his way until close in under the plateau. There he stopped and waited for his friend. He could have saved time, and a good deal of it, had he galloped in, leading Ranger by the lariat, but he waited. Glenham came bumping along presently, all gratitude and perspiration. Truscott handed him the rope, saying, "Hold him firmly, old boy." Glenham rode up the hill and, amid the applause of the ladies, into the garrison with his prize. Truscott rode under cover of the hill to the rear of his quarters, and there dismounted.

Nearly half an hour had been lost. Glenham was nervous and full of vexation. Grace too was a trifle annoyed by the half-patronizing, half-sympathetic remarks of the swarm of ladies, but their occasional criticisms of Glenham's awkwardness aroused her sympathy for him, and made her unusually gentle, almost tender, in her manner to him. The deft hands of Mr.

Ray speedily adjusted saddle and bridle, and he obligingly stood at Ranger's head while Glenham bunglingly assisted Grace to mount. With any skilful hand she could fly up like a bird. Then, without further delay, they turned and started up the row, Grace patting Ranger's neck and endeavoring to make friends.

But that ingenuous quadruped had not half had his spree out, and was ripe for more. The first thing he discovered was that instead of a huge bar of crooked iron in his mouth he was champing a slender rod of polished steel. No clumsy curb-strap chafed his jaw, and the light hand on the rein had not yet made him acquainted with the glittering chain that hung there, ready to do as good, even better, service than the strap. Then there was no pressure of muscular legs on both sides; that struck him as something utterly out of the usual line. Revolving these things in his mind, he concluded it worth while to experiment with this unknown rider. They were close to the end of the row, and here, right in front of the doctor's quarters, next to Truscott's, stood a group of six or seven officers. Six or seven caps were simultaneously raised, and that was all the excuse Ranger wanted. Stopping short, he strove to whirl about, but Grace's practised hand kept him faced to the front. Failing in that effort, he commenced to back, and a sharp cut of the whip was his reward. Stung by the blow, he sprang into air and came down "stiff-legged," but with no effect upon the seat or temper of his fair rider. Then he backed again, and received another lash. Enraged at a punishment he neither understood nor had ever known, he shook his head, backed again, and would almost have gone

upon his haunches, when suddenly a firm hand was laid on the rein, and Grace, flushed, vexed, and well-nigh defeated, looked down into the calm features of Mr. Truscott.

"Pardon me, Miss Pelham," he said. "I think I have just what you need here. Ranger doesn't know a whip, but he *does* understand the meaning of the spur."

With that he produced from the inner pocket of his blouse a pair of little silver spurs. "These look like toys," he continued, "and I bought them as such, but they are really very effective, as you will find. Stand at his head, orderly. Permit me, Miss Pelham." And stepping to her side he raised the skirt of her riding-habit, quickly and deftly adjusted one spur to her slender boot, then hung the other on the off-side of her pommel. "The straps are old and weak, and may break, so you had better have both," he explained, then was about to step back, when speech returned to her.

"Oh, *thank* you, Mr. Truscott, ever so much! Now I *know* I can manage him. This is very thoughtful of you, and I'll return them to-night."

"Don't think of it," he answered; "you will need them on many a ride, and besides, I know you will win them."

"Then take my whip," she impulsively cried, and tossing the slender toy with its wrist-loop of dark blue ribbon to him, she gathered her horse, the orderly stepped aside, her barbed heel drove firmly into Ranger's flank, and, obedient to the sting he knew, he sprang forward, and in an instant bore his fearless rider, guided by her firm hands, through the north

gate, around the long curve of the road and down the slope until even hat and veil disappeared from view below the edge of the plateau. An instant after, Glenham likewise shot out of sight, his forage-cap popping up twice before its final occultation.

Truscott's face wore a very anxious look as he slowly returned to his quarters, closed his bedroom door behind him, and, stepping to the window, lingeringly examined the pretty toy she had thrown to him. It was of English make, slender and delicate, but of the very best material and workmanship, fit accompaniment to the perfect saddle and bridle his appreciative eye had marked as he adjusted her spur. The silver-mounted handle bore a simple inscription, "Grace, from Father." He gazed longingly at the name, thinking, he could not help it, of the many times her soft, slender hand had closed upon it; then suddenly turning, he stepped to the wardrobe, paused one instant to press the handle to his lips, hung it by its loop way back in the dark recess, and abruptly hurried from the room.

On the piazza stood Ray, with clouded brow, gazing through a binocular up the distant road. Hearing Truscott's step, he turned.

"See anything of them?" asked Truscott, shortly.

"Not at this moment. They're behind that belt of cottonwood, going like blazes. There they are now!" he added, suddenly. "I hope to God that Glenham will have sense enough to make her stick to the road. The horses can't stand the pace much longer in that heavy sand."

Truscott took the glass and looked. "All right so

far," he said, after a pause, still keeping the glass at his eye.

"Truscott, what do you think of that bit?" asked Ray, abruptly. "She rides better than any woman I ever knew; but if that blackguard of a horse should bolt—you see I never thought of her riding him with anything but the cavalry curb."

"Nor I," said Truscott. "The bit is all right; unless—you remember the trick he used to have of catching the branch in his teeth?"

"By heaven! yes. And with these straight English curbs he could do it as easy as lying."

Truscott took out his watch, and with a start exclaimed, "I ought to have been at the office half an hour ago, and here comes the colonel's orderly after me now. Ray, what are you going to do this morning?"

"I was going to write up the record of that last court, but d—d if I can now. Going out Ranger will do well enough, probably. It's when he gets his head turned homewards that stampedes me. If he *should* bolt above the bend, where the road runs along the creek, why, it's as crooked as Oakes Ames, and he'd dash over some of those banks——"

"Take your horse," broke in Truscott,—“take your horse and go out beyond the four-mile bend anyhow. Yes, orderly, say to the colonel I'm coming at once.”

Five minutes after Ray was speeding up the valley, and Truscott was at his desk in the office. To his colonel's surprised and almost hurt "You are very late, Truscott," he replied very gently, in a voice that shook a little, "It was almost unavoidable, colonel; I will

explain it all when we get through." And good old Pelham asked nothing more.

Now to follow Ray. As he bounded along over the flats, taking short-cuts wherever he could, he had time to think over the situation, and did not half like it. Ever since the night of the ball at Prescott he had carried with him the tassel of Grace Pelham's fan, and Glenham knew it; more than that, Glenham had become cool and constrained in his manner towards him. It will be remembered that Ray had carried off the tassel just as he was hurrying to join his troop, and from that time to this he had not been back to his own station, Camp Cameron. During the brief campaign his troop had been attached to Canker's command, and around the bivouac-fires at night the young officers, frequently talking over the ball, could not refrain from speaking in terms of enthusiastic admiration of Miss Pelham's many attractive and lovely qualities, Ray being by long odds the most outspoken, while poor Glenham, with his heart burning with love for her, sat silently apart, puffing nervously at his pipe. He could not speak of her himself,—it was torture to him to hear them talk of her. It seemed like profanation to hear her name mentioned under such circumstances, though every word spoken was in genuine admiration and respect. Ray had been quick to notice this, and being a warm-hearted fellow, full of consideration for other people despite his recklessness as regarded himself, he it was who had privately suggested to his comrades the propriety of discontinuing the subject. "You can all see how wretched it makes Glenham,—poor devil! I know how it is myself, so let's quit it,

fellows," and quit it some of them did. But Crane and Carroll were possessed with malice and all uncharitableness, and Wilkins was not a gentleman, and this trio saw fit to disregard Ray's request. They were glad of a chance to worry Glenham, and for two evenings after the others had agreed to avoid the subject in Glenham's hearing these worthies had delightedly encouraged one another in keeping up sly allusions to the fact that as Miss Pelham and Truscott were all this time at Prescott together it would doubtless be an engagement by the time they got back. It was a significant fact that they selected such times as Ray was absent from the circle, looking after his herd guard, as he always did before turning in at night, to indulge in this luxury. Turner and Raymond were always early to bed, and, rolled in their blankets under the trees, heard nothing of it. Canker did not interpose. Hunter and Dana were boys just out of "the Point," and stood a little in awe of these older campaigners; but Ray ranked all the subalterns present, they knew and trusted him, for he had been one of their instructors in tactics and horsemanship at the Academy, and so the second night when he returned to the camp-fire Dana called him to one side and told him that Glenham had taken his blankets and gone off out of earshot and of the remarks of the trio on both nights while he was away. Ray blazed with wrath a moment, then he strolled unconcernedly back to the fire telling Dana to remain where he was, and in the most dulcet tones imaginable said, "Oh, Crane, Carroll, just come with me a moment, will you?" And ignoring Wilkins entirely, he led them, wondering, to

where Dana stood among the pines, out beyond the sleeping group of soldiers into a little open space in the clear moonlight, and there he turned and faced them.

“Mr. Crane, I address my remarks particularly to you. Mr. Carroll has but recently joined, and has not learned our ways yet. You have been *with* us for years. You never have been, probably never *will* be, of us. It seems that despite the discovery that our thoughtless talk about Miss Pelham greatly distressed Mr. Glenham, you have not only persisted in, but have added to this means of annoying him. One moment, Mr. Crane; let me finish, and then you may have the floor as long as you like (there was something silvery sweet in Ray’s voice and manner just here). *Gentlemen* who detect what we detected abstain from the possibility of giving pain or offence that cannot be resented, as Mr. Glenham cannot resent this. Cads and blackguards, Mr. Crane,—*cads* and *blackguards* continue to affront and annoy so long as they think they can do so unmolested.”

“Do you mean to insult me, sir?” fiercely demanded Lieutenant Crane.

“Just as you please about that, Mr. Crane,” said Ray, with all the placidity of a parson. “Mr. Dana is witness to my remarks. *They* certainly can be resented, and you are at liberty to take any steps in the matter your fancy may suggest. We march at seven to-morrow; there will be abundant light and time beforehand. Mr. Dana will receive any message you may choose to send. And now, Mr. Carroll, let me as a man who would like to be your friend suggest that, as

you are just commencing your career in the —th, that you cut loose from the society of men who are apt to lead you into trouble; your participation in this matter doubtless arose from inexperience and bad example. Come, Dana. Good-night, gentlemen.” And with that he turned to go.

Crane sulkily muttered some foul language as he stood glaring after Ray, and once more the latter faced him.

“Puppies, Mr. Crane, snarl and snap at the heels of men before whom they grovel and cringe. If you have anything to say, say it now while we are face to face, otherwise be silent, or add whelp to what I have already called you.” And Ray stood squarely confronting his bulky antagonist. But Crane knew his man too well. He muttered something about only having been in fun, not meaning to hurt Glenham’s feelings, etc., to which Ray replied with some asperity and much contempt,—

“Then let there be no more of it, unless you want this night’s conversation and the fact that you did not seek an officer’s reparation published through the regiment.”

This put an abrupt stop to Glenham’s nightly annoyances; he knew not to what influence to attribute the change, he vaguely felt that Ray had something to do with it, and yet *that* hurt him, for he knew that in the breast of his scouting-jacket Ray carried the tassel of her fan, and all that he had ever won from her was the glove he wore next his heart. Poor boy! He was very miserable throughout that brief raid, and when the order came to make for home and, when one day’s march away, he received reluctant permission to gallop

ahead, it was with absolute dismay that he heard that the general had directed Ray's troop to be retained at Camp Sandy, where Colonel Pelham wanted to gather as many companies as possible for battalion instruction. So Ray's and "G" troop were ordered to go into camp on the plateau behind the men's quarters, and Ray was sent ahead with him to make the necessary preparations. Then Colonel Pelham liked Ray immensely, so Glenham had always heard, and just as soon as Ray could resume his uniform, which he had left at Prescott, he appeared at the colonel's, and had been a very frequent caller during the few days preceding this of the ride. It worried Glenham, and, boy that he was, made his manner to Ray very distant and cold.

All this occurred to Ray as he sped up the valley. "I must not join them," he thought, "and even if they should meet me 'twould be awkward. He would be ass enough to think I was watching or spying." And so, perplexed and dissatisfied, Ray passed among the sharp turns and along the stony road-bed at Four-Mile Point, and after much twisting and turning, rode out from under the cottonwoods and willows, and there lay before him, winding up a gentle slope to the northwest, some five hundred yards of smooth and unobstructed road, the old road to Prescott as it lay in '7—making its first rise from the valley to climb the mountain chain to the west.

"All well so far, thank God!" he muttered to himself, and then bringing his steed down to a walk, he rode slowly up the slope, pondering over the next step to be taken. "They won't be apt to go much higher

up the valley," he said to himself. "She would like to make the most of her ride, no doubt, and gallop a good deal. They did gallop up along here," he continued, as his practised eye marked the hoof-tracks in the sand; "but once over that ridge, Glenham will want to go slow and spoon. There is no decent ford to take a lady over for five miles along the Sandy above here. No; they'll come back this way. Now, how the devil can I excuse my presence?" And thinking thus, some distance below the ridge Ray checked his horse and stopped still. Once on the crest, he knew that he and his horse could be seen from far up the valley. "I never felt so like a sneak in my life," he thought. "I've more than half a mind to go back; but then Truscott—No, by Jove, I'll stick."

Oh, well for many a loving heart, well for sweet Grace Pelham, well for them all was it that the quickest, surest light-horseman in Arizona stood to his post that day! Looking back down the slope, he marked the point around which the road suddenly turned out of sight; marked the jagged rocks over which the Sandy went tumbling and frothing to the willow-fringed shallows below; marked how the road seemed to end right there, to *lead* right there into the jaws of destruction. "D—n the man who engineered this road!" he says, aloud, and then, no longer irresolute as to his course, he turns to go on up the slope, when—God! what is that sound that blanches his cheek? The sputter of gravel, the fierce, terrible rattle and clatter of runaway hoofs. All in a second it flashed upon him just what to expect. All in a second there rushed into view upon the ridge a sight that froze the blood

in his veins. Ranger, his head high in air, the bit in his teeth, dashing blindly, madly towards him, and Grace—Grace, hat and veil gone, her beautiful hair streaming behind her, still firmly maintaining seat and rein, but powerless to control the wild rush of her steed,—horse and rider came flying down the slope, down towards the pitiless rocks and surges that lay but that short five hundred yards away. *Now*, Ray, Where are you? Oh, never fear for him! Pluck and skill and grit, coolness and nerve were never lacking when Ray stood by. Quick as a flash he reins his horse to left about. Quick as a flash the spurred heels strike home, and with the shout of “Go, you scoundrel!” ringing in his startled ears, Ray’s horse springs into a charge down the slope, *leading* Ranger by half a dozen lengths. Well over to the left of the road his rider guides him, looking warily ahead and noting with satisfaction that no boulders or heavy stones mar the track. Then, cool and steady, he turns in the saddle and waves his hand to her with cheery shout, “All right, Miss Gracie! Let him come! Give him his head!” She cannot distinguish the words, but her glorious eyes brighten, and she smiles bravely back. Ranger is gaining with every stride. The racer of the regiment, he is furious at being led. Again Ray urges on his fresher steed. No use to close in on Ranger now; he would simply swerve off to the right and, once on the turf, leave all behind him until he plunged into some of the pits or sloughs along the flats. A hundred yards more and the road dives under the steep bank which shuts it close to the boiling water; but then, O God! how short a span beyond is that terrible turn, those

frightful rocks! With every stride is Ranger gaining. Nearer they come to the sheltering bank. Warily Ray lowers his right hand behind his thigh, and with head half turned watches the crazy brute tearing up closer to his flank. Now the bank is rising on their right. Now Ranger's head is close on his quarter, opposite his shoulder, almost opposite his horse's head. *Now, Ray!* And like flash of feathered arrow the gauntleted hand comes down on the curb, and a grasp of iron is laid on Ranger's mouth. Well he knows the hand. There follow a few ineffectual plunges, and then, with much crashing of gravel and hoof, panting, heaving, foaming, he is brought to a halt,—ten yards from the turn! Then Ray looks at Grace. She is trying to say something, trying to smile, but the reins drop from her nerveless hands, the words falter on her lips, the smile dies away, and, white as a sheet, she is reeling in her saddle. Quick, quick as ever, his right arm is thrown around her waist, and he lifts her from her seat, swings to the ground on the *off* side of his horse, then, as he would carry a child, he bears her to the bank of the stream, lays her gently at the foot of a tree, fills his cap with water, which he sprinkles on her face, then, as she starts and gives a little shuddering sigh, he kneels close beside her, lifts her tenderly on his arm till her head rests upon his shoulder, and then with the same old foraging head-gear he fans and at the same time liberally besprinkles the sweet, pale face. Ah! what is he calling her? What is he saying to her as the glorious eyes slowly open? Why do the heavily-fringed lids close so quickly? And that faint color that surges up to cheek and brow, what brings it

there? What means this picture that bursts upon the eyes of Glenham, who reins up beside them in an agony of fear? Ray looks blithely up.

"It's all right, Glenham. No harm done; just a little faint. Gallop in and bring out the ambulance, there's a good fellow."

And, sick at heart, Glenham goes.

CHAPTER XII.

MEANTIME, the colonel and Truscott remained at their desks in the office, the former occasionally addressing some question to his silent subordinate, and then going on in his methodical way with his letters. From time to time the sergeant-major or a clerk would enter with a fresh batch of papers, which would be noiselessly deposited on the adjutant's desk, and those already signed were as quietly removed, and in the adjoining room, where the clerks were busily at work, made ready for the mail.

At last, as eleven o'clock drew nigh, the colonel appeared to have completed his writing, and, with a stretch and yawn, rose and strolled over to Truscott's desk.

"Don't you think it strange we have no answer from the general about those scouts?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Truscott, rising. "But you know that Sieber is still out. He may be waiting for his report."

"All he says is this," said the colonel, hunting first in his coat-pockets, then among the papers on his desk, and picking up finally a telegraphic despatch: "'Hold Fanshawe, Craig, and the Indian scouts at Sandy until further orders;'" and in order to read he had stepped to the window looking out on the parade. "Have you

any idea when Sieber will be in?" he asked. "By Jove! I believe the chief will come down again himself. Even the telegraph is too slow for him. Truscott," he continued, while waiting for reply to his own question, "you cannot be well. I never saw you so white and haggard, and the circles under your eyes haunt me. 'Pon my word, I think you need medical advice, or rest, or change, or something. I thought you looked ill enough yesterday, but this morning it's worse."

"It is nothing serious, colonel. I've been sitting up late and smoking too much, I fancy. There was a vast deal to be done when we got back, and I could not let the work go."

"That is why we see so little of you at the house, I suppose," said Pelham. "You must try and come in often. Jack—I—well—I never knew how to speak to you about it, but that wild boy of mine has recently written me something of what you have been to him. He hasn't told me all, he says, but he has told me enough to make me very grateful, as his mother would be too if she knew the influence for good you have over him; but he shrinks from letting her know anything of his scrapes, or Grace either. I don't know how to thank you, old fellow, but—let us see more of you. I want you to know Grace."

He had put his hand affectionately on Truscott's shoulder, and now, though his eyes were filled with tears, the old soldier looked straight into Truscott's, and for a second the two clasped hands, but the adjutant said not a word. Then they strolled out on the piazza together.

"Did you see Grace and Glenham start this morn-

ing?" asked the colonel. "I had to hurry over here to answer those telegrams, and missed it. Hollo! here come Mrs. Tanner and Rosalie," he went on. "Morning, Mrs. Tanner," he called out, cheerily, as the stanch Concord wagon spun along past them, and the smiling faces of its occupants nodded cordial response to the salutations of the officers. "Been taking Rosalie a drive down the valley, I suppose," he said. "Truscott, I never knew that little woman until Tanner's troop came here last summer, and, do you know? I think she's one of the most perfect ladies I ever met. And yet my wife, and Grace, too, by Jupiter, are perfectly dumb when I speak of her to them. What's the reason, hey?"

But Truscott did not hear; was not listening. With cheek growing whiter every instant, his eyes were fixed upon the figure of a soldier running towards them,—the stable sergeant of Tanner's troop. An awful dread had seized upon him. He sprang forward to meet the man.

"What is it, sergeant? Quick!"

"Ranger, sir. He's just come in all foam, and——"

"What, Jack! What is it?" gasped the colonel, with ashen face and staring eyes.

"Get into Mrs. Tanner's ambulance and go right up the valley, sir. Take her with you. Ranger is in without Grace!"

"Oh, my God!" cried poor old Pelham, as, bewildered and horror-stricken, he ran with Truscott towards Tanner's quarters. There Jack almost lifted him into the wagon, and quickly told Mrs. Tanner what was wanted. Crack went the whip, and at a

dead run they darted through the north gate, leaving poor little Rosalie crying with fright and astonishment upon the piazza. As they tore down the hill, Truscott, seated beside the driver, rose and almost hurrahed,—

“Cheer up, colonel. We’ll find her all right. Here’s Ray’s horse too, and he’s got her.”

On they went, the driver lashing his mules into a gallop as they whirled along the sandy flats. Once or twice a groan escaped the colonel’s lips, and Mrs. Tanner gently spoke,—

“I’m sure you will find her safe. Mr. Ray was there in time, or his horse would not be here now.”

Two miles out, and—— “Here comes Glenham!” exclaimed Truscott.

“Where is Grace? Is she hurt?” almost screamed the colonel, thrusting head and half his body through the doorway.

“No, sir. All safe—at Four-Mile——”

“Go on, driver!” shouted the colonel, never caring to hear the rest of Glenham’s report. Away went the ambulance, and poor Arthur, breathless, unnerved by excitement, terror, and misery, turned his panting horse about to follow in their tracks, and then, drooping his head upon the brawny neck before him, covering his face with his hands, he burst into tears.

A short drive took the party in the ambulance to the Point, much to the astonishment and very much to the disgust of Mr. Ray, whose determination to make hay while the sun shone was thus summarily broken in upon. He had calculated that at least an hour would elapse before any vehicle could reach them from the post, and here it was barely thirty minutes. Pelham sprang out

and seized his daughter in his arms, kissing her repeatedly before he spoke at all. Then he turned to Ray, and grasped his hand.

"I have heard no particulars. Glenham said she was unhurt, but somehow I feel that we owe it to you."

"You ought to have seen it, father," said Grace; "it was the most skilful catch of a runaway horse that ever I heard of. Ranger had the bit in his teeth and was simply uncontrollable; and when we came tearing down this hill, and I saw those rocks ahead—well, you can hardly imagine how glad I was to hear Mr. Ray's voice."

Meantime, Truscott had assisted Mrs. Tanner to alight, and the gentle little lady came forward with him to congratulate Miss Pelham on her escape. Grace looked embarrassed the instant she caught sight of the pair, but thanked them with great civility for their prompt appearance. Then the colonel insisted upon her driving home with them at once. The wagon was reversed, and the entire party took seats therein except Glenham, who had meantime arrived, and remained in the saddle a silent and miserable spectator of the scene. His woe-begone aspect caught Grace's eye, and she leaned forward holding out her hand. "*Please* don't worry about it, Mr. Glenham," she said, in her gentle voice. "*Please* don't worry. It was all my own fault; you know I insisted on trying that gallop against your advice." And the young fellow's face brightened as he eagerly clasped the extended hand. Then they parted; the "Concord" driving back to the post, and Glenham riding up the road in search of the vanished chimney-pot.

That evening Mr. Ray dined at the colonel's. On every account it ought to have been to him a most enjoyable occasion ; but long before coffee was served the young gentleman wished that he were dining, as indeed he often had dined, on hard-tack, cheese, and herring, with bottled beer *ad libitum*, down at the sutler's store. To begin with, Grace was very pale and silent. She strove to entertain him at first, and to appear bright and cheerful, but despite her efforts he plainly saw that something had gone very much amiss. Her beautiful eyes gave unmistakable tokens of recent and excessive weeping, and her sweet, low voice was tremulous in the last degree. In pity and sympathy he turned to the colonel, and addressed his conversation exclusively to him. It was the colonel who, with great effusiveness, had burst into his tent about one o'clock in the afternoon and seized him by both hands. "Ray, my dear boy, in my anxiety to get Grace into the house and with her mother I did not half thank you for the inestimable service you rendered me. By heaven ! I believe that we owe her life to you," he had exclaimed, and then after a chat of half an hour had made Ray promise to come to dinner and gone off homeward. But dinner at the colonel's did not take place until after evening parade, and meantime all sorts of things had happened ; and when dinner-time came Grace was well-nigh prostrated, the colonel was wretched, and madame, the lady of the house, appeared only as dinner was announced, took her seat with an air of melodramatic grandeur, and not only failed to say one word of thanks to Ray for the rescue of the morning, but absolutely treated him with haughty displeasure. Not one civil

word did she speak during the hour he spent in the house; and to be brief, she had started in about two o'clock, when the colonel came home saying he had invited Ray to dinner, and spent the afternoon in making her husband and daughter utterly miserable. How she accomplished this will be detailed presently. Ray, as has been said, addressed his conversation to the colonel, and with all the tact at his command strove to hide his own discomfiture. The colonel, for his part, made fitful efforts to appear jolly and hospitable. To this end he kept the wine in constant play, and to Grace's consternation it soon became evident that the unusual indulgence was telling upon him with startling effect. He talked incessantly, he made frequent repetitions, his face flushed, and his tongue grew thick; and finally, with a glare of wrath and defiance at his wife, he brought his clinched fist down on the table with a thump that made the glasses ring, and exclaimed, "Ray, you saved my daughter's life, my dear boy, and you shall be welcome to my house and my table whenever you choose to come, no matter who dares to interfere." Whereupon her ladyship rose and left the table, Grace following, but stopping to bend and press her pure lips upon her father's heated brow; then giving her hand to Ray, she begged him to excuse her going to her room, saying that after all she found she was a trifle shaken by the morning's adventure; but her eyes plainly said "Please go," and go he did ten minutes after, declaring he heard first call for tattoo, with tattoo still an hour away. Then the colonel took a nap on the sofa, and Mrs. Pelham sent a messenger to say that she would like to see Mr. Glenham.

No wonder Grace was looking pale and exhausted that evening. With her buoyant health and her years of experience in the saddle, there was nothing in the runaway of the morning to cause any especial distress as an after-effect; and so to reassure her mother she had laughed off the affair, changed her dress, and appeared at luncheon as though nothing had happened. She had recounted the entire adventure to her ladyship in all its essential particulars, but notwithstanding a rigorous cross-examination she had found it possible to make no mention of Mr. Ray's emotional method of restoring her to consciousness. Madame had sharply watched her as she told how the last thing she remembered was his lifting her from the saddle, and the vivid blush that rose to her temples had excited the maternal curiosity, if not suspicion, and had filled her with vague alarm. Still, all might have gone well had not Mr. Glenham appeared about noon bringing the riding-hat and veil. Mrs. Pelham welcomed him eagerly, led him into the parlor, and, noting his pallor and distress, had made him swallow a glass of wine. Then she relentlessly assailed him with questions, found him hopeless and dejected, and strove to encourage him, but he broke forth impulsively,—

“It is no use, Mrs. Pelham. I have no luck. Everything is against me. I might have some chance were it not for Ray, but every moment only adds to his advantage. She has liked him from the very first; and to-day—to-day—she *must* care for him, for when I reached them she was in his arms and—and he kissing her.” And poor Glenham covered his face with his hands and groaned.

Lady Pelham was horrified. What! Grace—her Grace falling in love with that penniless, dissolute young reprobate Ray! It was monstrous; it was unbearable. It *should* not be. She made Glenham promise to obey her instructions implicitly, and finally dismissed him with the assurance that Ray should be sent to the right-about, and that Grace should be brought to her senses forthwith. Then she started for Grace's room; but the ladies began to flock in to inquire after the young lady, and not until after luncheon did she get her innings.

Of that interview the less said the better. Grace was accused of everything that was indelicate, immodest, unladylike. A disgraceful flirtation with a man who was utterly beneath her—accepting his caresses—and for aught she knew returning them—*lying* in his arms. Shameful! shameful! And all the time leading Glenham on and encouraging him, and Truscott, too. It was bad enough with him at Prescott; but this—oh, what *would* her poor father say if he knew it?

Great heaven! why attempt to describe it? Is there on earth, can there be in Gehenna, anything to equal in bitterness, in rank injustice, in stinging, scourging, scalding venom, the ruthless tongue of an infuriated and disappointed woman? In vain Grace implored and protested; in vain she declared that it was only in her swoon that he had held her; in vain she denied all knowledge of his kiss. Her mother stormed on until in her agony Grace rushed from the room just as her father entered the house, and threw herself, in a passion of tears, into his arms. Sobbing and breathless, she

strove to tell her story, but could not, though he led her into the parlor, and taking her on his knee, holding her close to his breast, as he had done so many a time in her childhood, he strove to soothe and calm her. Her ladyship followed and took the floor, reiterating her accusations, for, thoroughly enraged, she cared not what she said. For a moment he listened in dumb amaze. Then, with his arm still holding his daughter close to his heart, he sprang to his feet and stood confronting her.

"Stop it, I say! Stop it at once! I will not listen to such outrageous talk," he sternly spoke, while his face grew white and his firm mouth set like a rigid line under the crisp gray moustache.

"Oh, better hear it from me, Colonel Pelham, than as the scandal of the garrison, as you *will* hear it," she answered.

"*Who* dared tell you such a thing? I don't believe a word of it. You are crazy, Dolly. Think what you are saying, and restrain yourself. Gracie, darling, I know it is all a lie. Don't sob so, girlie; *don't* sob so," he pleaded, as his lips were pressed upon her forehead and his trembling hand caressed her shining hair.

She raised her face to his, striving to smile through her tears, striving to control herself.

"I had fainted, papa. I—I know that he lifted me in his arms, but—oh!—nothing else, except—except some foolish words he spoke."

"How did you know this? *Who* is your authority for *your* statement?" he said, angrily, turning towards his wife, who was pacing the floor like a tragedy queen.

She stopped and glared at them as she almost hissed her reply.

"Mr. Glenham, the gentleman she has been trifling with, saw it all. He is my authority. Perhaps you will doubt me now, Colonel Pelham."

"Glenham be d——d!" shouted the colonel, now fairly beside himself with wrath. "The idea of his coming whining here to you with such a miserable complaint! If that's the sort of man you want your daughter to marry, you can understand right here that I won't stand it. As for Mr. Ray, by Gad! Mrs. Pelham, he has my respect and sympathy. Yes, ma'am, my respect and sympathy. I don't see how he could help kissing her; I—I'd have done it myself in his place; and she's no more to blame than you are, nor half as much, by Gad!" Evidently the colonel was getting madder and madder, and waxing illogical and incoherent. Madame saw it and recognized her advantage. Oh, woman, woman! you might have spared him, you might have spared her, the bitter blow you had in reserve, but in your relentless wrath nothing short of torture could suffice.

"Mr. Ray comes here to dinner to-day, Mrs. Pelham, and you will see that he is properly received and entertained. He saved our Gracie's life, God bless him! And you—you've no more gratitude than a cat," continued our irate and injudicious colonel. "And as for this infernal story of your friend, Mr. Glenham, I mean to sift it for myself. I had some regard for him before. *Now* it's my belief he's a mere milksop."

Seeing her father's increasing rage, poor Grace had checked her tears and was striving in vain to restrain

him. He still stood with his left arm closely enfolding her, his right arm free and gesticulating violently. It was upraised as he closed with his denunciation of Glenham, and he stood there with flushed and angry features frowning at his wife.

For an instant there was silence. Then came her answer. Every word sharp as the crack of a whip, remorseless, relentless.

"Invite your gamblers and libertines if you will, Colonel Pelham, but spare your abuse of an honest and generous gentleman. *Possibly* you may feel some regret for your intemperate language when I tell you that but for Mr. Glenham your own flesh and blood would now have been involved in ruin and disgrace, that but for his magnanimity your son would have been driven to suicide."

Slowly the color faded from Pelham's face, slowly he unwound his arm from his daughter's waist and leaned uneasily forward, slowly the angry light faded from his eyes, and little by little a wistful, bewildered gaze took its place. He attempted to speak, but choked in the effort. At last the words came. "What do you mean?" he whispered. "I don't understand."

"Simply this," she answered, coldly: "Ralph has been speculating: he obtained in some way five hundred dollars which he felt sure of being able to replace in three days; lost it all and was ruined. He had only one hope—Mr. Glenham, and Mr. Glenham instantly telegraphed him the money from Prescott."

"How do you know this?" gasped the colonel. "Has Mr. Glenham told you this, too?" he asked, un-

just in his misery, as many and many a man has been, warm-hearted as he was.

“Mr. Glenham is too much of a gentleman to mention such a thing. There, sir, is your son’s letter to me.” And she tossed him a rumpled sheet. He took it from the table mechanically, seated himself on the lounge, and began to read. Without a word Mrs. Pelham strode from the room and ascended the stairs. Grace stood a moment like one in a trance, then wearily turning, slowly, dreamily sought her own room. Colonel Pelham remained motionless on the lounge, and Maggie, the housemaid, putting things to rights in the dining-room, knocked off work and went in next door to tell Bridget, the cook, of the high jinks at the commanding officer’s that afternoon.

CHAPTER XIII.

PENDING the arrival of Mr. Glenham, for whom her ladyship had sent her messenger, she took a seat upon the piazza. The evening air was chilly, and she wrapped her mantle closely around her and fell to thinking over the events of the day. It cannot be said that she felt either elation or happiness over the result of her efforts. Now that her paroxysm of rage had vanished she began to realize that she had been horribly unjust to Grace, and yet had anybody suggested that she had been brutally unjust it would have fired her with sufficient self-righteous fervor to have nerved her to repeat with emphasis every word she had uttered. Then there was her husband. She had humbled him in the way of all others she well knew would hurt him the most. She had goaded him into saying harsh and unjust things about one of his officers, and then cracked over his head the terrific whip of his great and hitherto unknown obligation to that gentleman. She had inflicted upon him in Grace's presence the deep humiliation of hearing that his favorite son had again been resorting to questionable means of raising money for stock-gambling, and having lost, had appealed to officers of his regiment for assistance and got it. She had absolutely insinuated, as though to throw brine upon the quivering flesh she had galled, that Ralph had con-

fessed to her that he had tampered with funds that he had no authority to use, which was untrue and unpardonable in a mother, but rage was in her heart when she did it, and she thought of nothing but how surest to wound. She had humbled him in the dust, and what had she gained? Now that it was all over she sat there brooding over the affair. The colonel was sleeping heavily upon the lounge in the parlor; Grace, who had gone to her room immediately after dinner, had stolen down-stairs and arranged the pillow more comfortably under his head, and then, after fanning him a while, had seated herself in a low chair, and with her face buried in her hands was trying to think calmly over all that had happened. The lamp burned low on the parlor table, and Mrs. Pelham looking through the slats of the blind could see her as she sat in this attitude of utter dejection. The mother's heart for a moment struggled within her and urged her to go and take her to her bosom and beg her pardon for the hideous language she had used that day, but no. It was no time for weakness, she argued. By all means, by *any* means, she must be made to marry Glenham, and then, said her ladyship, once rich, independent, with a husband who adores her, she will be happy, and will thank me for my unswerving course. Yes, the end will justify the means. She must fret and worry now a while. Truscott is no longer to be dreaded. Thanks to his devotion, or the story of his devotion to Mrs. Tanner, *he* is disposed of, and Ray will be as easily settled. She cannot have learned to care for him so suddenly. And so ran her ladyship's reflections, and so she found excuses for her unnatural conduct.

Ralph's letter had by no means justified the tragic manner and language of her announcement. It was a simple, warm-hearted, boyish confession to his mother that he had lost five hundred dollars in speculation, that the money for the margins had been raised unknown to his father, and that he would have been swamped but for Glenham. "I wrote to Truscott of my trouble, in accordance with a promise I had made him, and instantly Glenham sent me the money. Now I have quit it for good and all, and I want you to know it," was pretty much what he had written. All the rest of her sensational account was purely an invention of her own. She hated to think that Truscott was in any way mixed up in the matter; but there is no need of Grace's knowing that, she argued. She must understand that it is all Mr. Glenham's doing. But where *was* Glenham all this time? She had sent for him long since, and he had not come, nor had the orderly returned. What did it mean? The night was dark and chill, occasional gusts of wind whirled through the line of deserted piazzas. Officers' row outside was desolate. Every one was in-doors. Nobody seemed to be calling on anybody. She had dreaded that some of the ladies would be over to make further inquiries, but none had come. In fact, her ladyship's unpopularity had begun to be recognized as established by this time, for she had snubbed pretty much every woman in the garrison, and none of them cared to call upon her unless some new story about somebody or other was floated upon the tide of garrison talk, and thereby rendered a chat with her ladyship endurable. Very lonely she felt as she sat there looking out on the dark parade and listening

for the clank of the orderly's sabre as he returned from his quest. Over at the adjutant's office the lights were burning brilliantly as ever, and there she knew Truscott to be at work. Half an hour passed, and at last a form came stalking up before her through the darkness,—the orderly, but no Glenham.

"Could you not find Mr. Glenham?" she asked.

"No, ma'am. The loot'nint isn't in his quarters, nor down at the store, nor over at the company. I've looked everywhere, ma'am, except among the officers' quarters."

She pondered a moment. It was hardly possible that he would be calling anywhere this evening of all others. A sudden thought struck her.

"Have you been to Mr. Ray's camp?"

"Yes'm, an' he ain't there. Mr. Ray, he's down at the store playin'——" and the orderly finished his sentence with a conscience-stricken gulp, it suddenly occurring to him that possibly poker was not to be mentioned to so exalted a lady as the colonel's wife, but madame had no scruples in the matter. Here was a possibility of confirmatory evidence at Mr. Ray's expense.

"What was he playing, orderly?"

"Cards, ma'am."

"Yes. Cards, of course; but what game?"

"They plays it with chips, ma'am," said the orderly, vainly struggling to repair the damage of his unlucky admission.

"You mean poker, of course," persisted madame. "Who else was in the game?"

"Faith, ma'am, I didn't notice. I was lookin' for Mr. Glenham," stammered the soldier, wishing to

heaven he were out of her clutches; and she, finding it useless to question further, dismissed him and returned to her reflections.

Then soft and clear there rose from near the flag-staff the trumpet signal for "first call;" and, as the mellow notes were repeated, the doors of the men's quarters across the parade were opened, and, with jest and laughter and merry talk, the troopers came sauntering out. Here and there lights flitted to and fro,—the lanterns of the first sergeants. Then the trumpeters of the entire command, having united, began their march around the garrison, sounding their stirring quicksteps. Door after door along officers' row opened and gave exit to some muffled figure, and the lanterns of the company officers danced away across the dark parade. Then her own door opened and closed with a slam, and her husband stood beside her. He glanced curiously at her one instant, and, without a word, strolled off to the other end of the piazza; he who rarely met her without some kindly greeting, and she knew well how deeply she had wounded him; then the assembly rang out upon the still air, and the "here," "here," of the men could be distinctly heard, and the gruff voices of the sergeants calling their rolls; then the lanterns all seemed to be converging towards a solitary light that stood under the flag-staff, each halting short some few paces from it, and such communications as "Company 'B,' present, or accounted for," "Company 'F,' Private Muligan absent," came floating along the chill night air; then all the lanterns scattered, and soon were out of sight; all save one,—the stationary light in the centre

of the parade; and presently Truscott's deep voice was heard calling for the first sergeant of some company, and then the colonel sharply turned,—

“Orderly, my compliments to the adjutant, and say I wish to see him.”

Another moment and the tall form of Mr. Truscott appeared, lantern bearing, and the colonel spoke,—

“What troop was that failed to report?”

“‘K,’ sir.”

“‘K!’ Captain Canker’s! Whose duty was it to receive the report of the roll-call?”

“Mr. Glenham’s, sir.”

“Why, where on earth is Glenham? I never knew him to miss roll-call before.”

“Nor I, colonel. It is possible he has slept through over home. He was looking very worn and tired at dinner.”

“Beg pardon, sir,” broke in the orderly; “I’ve been everywhere for the loot’nint this evening, and I don’t believe he’s in garrison.”

“Where else could he be? There’s no earthly place to go to,” said Pelham, impatiently. “See if you can find him, Truscott,—not that I want to see him to-night, —and then—come back, will you? I want to see you.”

“And should you find Mr. Glenham, be so kind as to say that Mrs. Pelham would like to speak with him a few minutes,” said madame, placidly, and Truscott walked rapidly away towards the northern end of the row.

Sitting in the parlor, Grace had heard most of the conversation. Her heart was full of pity for Glenham before the events of this day, and the suffering in his

young face had touched her deeply when she saw him at noon. Now, now it seemed that he had rescued Ralph, the brother whom she dearly loved, from a fate that was bitter as death. How could she thank him? Where was he? What did this strange absence mean?

Distressed and anxious, she stepped out on the piazza and joined her father, who was standing in moody silence where Truscott had left him. She slipped her hand within his arm, saying not a word, and rested her soft cheek upon his shoulder. The colonel sighed deeply as he patted the little hand, and then touched her brow with his lips. Neither spoke, but in deep, sweet sympathy father and daughter understood and comforted one another.

Meantime, Truscott had reached his quarters. The lamps were burning dimly, and a brief inspection showed him that Glenham was not in the house, but his cavalry overcoat and his favorite pipe were gone too, and, taking his lantern, the adjutant quickly stepped out on the back gallery, and in a moment more had gained the edge of the bluff north of the post. Here, a short pistol range from the gate, there had been built in the bank a stout timber framework, on which was hung a huge wooden water-wheel, turned by the flow from the *acequia* on the plateau. The wheel worked a force-pump, by means of which a small supply of water was driven through wooden pipes along the back of officers' row. The splash of the water fell with a musical sound upon Truscott's ear as he approached the little waste weir above the wheel. He walked quickly and unhesitatingly towards it.

"Poor fellow," he said to himself, "he has dreaded

meeting any of the 'crowd' to-night, and has stolen out here somewhere to dodge them."

Searching along the bank, he came to a pathway leading down to the well below the wheel, and, cautiously descending it, he suddenly heard his name called; a sleepy voice inquiring,—

"That you, Jack? What's up?"

"Time you were up, youngster," was the half-laughing answer. "What do you mean by gipsying out here all night?"

"I suppose I must have been asleep," replied Glenham; "though God knows I didn't expect to sleep this night," he added, in a tone of such deep dejection that, as he rose, Truscott stretched forth a kindly hand and aided him up the slope.

"Never mind, old fellow, none of the gang will be around to bother you. Come into the house and spruce up a bit. Mrs. Pelham wants to see you, and the chief wants to see me. We'll go down together."

And so the watchers on the colonel's piazza were soon rewarded by the sight of the adjutant and his comrade rapidly approaching, the faithful lantern still swinging in Truscott's hand. Pelham greeted the younger officer with an attempt at jocularitas that well nigh choked him. Then saying,—

"I believe Mrs. Pelham wants to have a word with you," he turned to Truscott. "Come in, Jack," he said, and led the way into the parlor, whither Grace had already fled. She rose as they entered, intending to leave the room, but her father called to her not to go, and Truscott, stepping forward, held out his hand, saying,—

"It is the first opportunity I have had, Miss Pelham. I heartily congratulate you on your escape this morning. I think I ought to say on your own pluck and good riding."

"Pluck and good riding would not have saved me, Mr. Truscott, if Mr. Ray had not been there."

"Possibly not. Ray's skill is proverbial, but pluck and good riding kept you in your seat when many a woman would have been hurled out and dragged."

"See here, Truscott," broke in the colonel, "suppose you ride with Grace to-morrow. You can spare the time now, can you not? and I'll feel safe when she is with you."

Despite his efforts at self-control the blood rushed to the very roots of his hair. Truscott had marked all too keenly Grace's constraint and coldness towards him since their arrival at Sandy, and Mrs. Pelham's rudeness was the talk of the garrison. Grace, too, had colored at her father's abrupt request, but said no word of remonstrance. So Truscott quickly spoke,—

"I shall be most happy, Miss Pelham, if you will honor me as the colonel suggests;" and Grace could not but accept. "To-morrow morning, then," he added, and with that he turned to his colonel as she passed on into the adjoining room.

Then the old soldier grasped his hand, and in a voice that trembled in spite of his efforts at self-control, the colonel impetuously broke forth,—

"Jack, what is this about Ralph? I want to know everything. He writes to his mother that he has lost money in speculating, and that through you he has borrowed five hundred dollars from Glenham; and he in-

timates that but for this timely aid he would have been ruined. Where—how did he raise the money in the first place?”

Again the flush of embarrassment rose to Truscott's temples. He hesitated before speaking, but presently the words came, calmly, resolutely.

“Just where he got it I do not know, but this I do know, that in no way has he employed the funds of his firm; in no way has he violated his trust. He borrowed the money from some broker, giving his note at thirty days,—some broker who knew him and felt sure of his money. He has been led into this speculation by overconfident friends in San Francisco, and he and they have been swallowed by larger and shrewder operators. It is an expensive experience, colonel, but a valuable one. He wrote me fully and frankly, and I feel confident that the case stands as I tell it to you.”

“God bless you, Jack! God bless you for the lifting of this load from my heart. I—I feared it was far worse. His mother said—well, she misunderstood him, or his letter, or somehow she got it wrong. She thought he might have been tempted and—you know, Jack—embezzled the money. It upset her and made her nervous, I suppose, for she broke it to us in rather a rough way. God bless you again, Jack! you've been a good friend to my boy.” And now the tears were streaming down old Pelham's rugged face, and he stepped hurriedly to the door leading to the dining-room.

“Grace, daughter, come here. I want you to hear what Truscott says; it isn't as your mother put it, thank

God ! it isn't that at all." And leading her in, he sank upon the sofa and buried his face in his great bandanna, almost sobbing in his relief and joy.

Looking down into the sweet, pale features, Truscott repeated to Grace, in his grave, gentle way, just what he had told her father, and as he finished, and the eager, anxious, wistful gaze fled from her face, giving place to radiant joy, she stood one second looking up into his eyes ; then, with an uncontrollable impulse, she threw forward both her little hands, seizing his with a clasp that sent the blood thrilling through his veins, her glorious eyes welled with tears, and she exclaimed, "Oh, no wonder father says 'God bless you!' Mr. Truscott. I say it. I pray it again and again. God bless you! God bless you!" And upon this most touching and delightful of domestic pictures who should there be gazing in dismay and astonishment but Lady Pelham herself? Yes, there she stood at the parlor-door, well-nigh petrified with amazement. Not one of the three observed her. All were too much occupied in their own affairs to think of her an instant. Listening, she heard Truscott reply. Oh, could any woman mistake the meaning of that intonation, the infinite tenderness, the tremulous, almost caressing sweetness of his deep voice?

"I have done nothing to deserve such thanks, Miss Grace; though there is nothing I would not do. Don't fear for Ralph. You shall have his own letters—yes, this very night if you like, and see for yourself how undeserving he is of such suspicion."

And then, of course, her ladyship swept forward. "If *you* have any letters of my son's bearing upon

this matter, Mr. Truscott, *I* desire to see them, and to-morrow morning will be time enough. Grace has had quite enough agitation for one day and needs repose. Colonel Pelham, with your permission I will say good-night. Come, Grace."

But Grace did not come with the alacrity expected of her. Hardly noticing her mother, she stepped to the colonel's side as he sat mopping his face in his handkerchief, bent over him, twining her arms around his neck and kissing him tenderly. Then she rose, and standing before Truscott, again held out her hand, and smiling brightly up in his face, exclaimed,—

"I wish I knew how to thank you, Mr. Truscott, but now I can only say good-night."

Only say good-night! But what went with it? Oh, Grace, Grace! were you after all immodest, unladylike? If not, how can you account for, how can you defend, the fact that you did, honestly and actually, not exactly squeeze, but press, Jack Truscott's hand? To this day he has never forgotten it.

That Mrs. Pelham was all ready by this time to inflict another tirade of abuse upon her daughter is not to be doubted by any reasonable being who had once become well acquainted with that energetic matron. Having marshalled Grace out of the room, she likewise made her exit, closing the door behind her, and the stairs were presently heard creaking under her weight. Grace had fluttered up like a bird, and rushing to her room had closed her door with some emphasis, quite as much as to say that she was in no mood for further lectures. But her indomitable parent followed relentlessly in her footsteps, and entered the

sanctuary with no ceremony whatever. Another moment, and her voice became audible in the parlor below. Truscott bade his colonel good-night, and that veteran went up the stairs two at a time and precipitated himself upon his better-half in the midst of an imposing sentence.

"Dolly! We've had too much of this sort of thing to-day. Not one word now. I mean it. Come at once to your own room and leave Grace in peace."

Rare indeed were the occasions when he ventured thus to assert himself before her. But when he did she had the deep sagacity to obey. One experience at revolt years before had resulted so disastrously that never again did she attempt it, and so now with a glance full of meaning at her daughter, and a heart full of passion and bitterness, she rose in silence and left the room.

Jack Truscott walked home with a wild elation in his heart, with pulses still bounding from the pressure of that slender white hand. He heard Glenham moving about in his own room, but somehow he could not bear to see Glenham just then. Lighting his pipe, and throwing his cavalry circular around him, he took a seat out in the darkness of the piazza, and strove calmly to think it all over. Until this night she had plainly shown a desire to keep him at a distance, and he, too proud to question, had accordingly avoided her. He could understand the maternal antipathy, but not that of Grace. To-night, all of a sudden, all was changed, and sweeter, more attractive than ever, she had shown herself to him in her true light. Striving to fathom it all, he became absorbed in

thought, and failed to hear Glenham's footsteps as the latter approached him; he started as a hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Jack, I want to talk to you; I want your advice." It was Glenham, pipe in mouth and camp-chair in hand, who had accosted him. He shook himself together, and with an effort bade his young comrade pull up his chair and fire away.

"It isn't such a long story, Jack; I sha'n't bore you a great while. You know Mrs. Pelham sent for me to-night, and we had a talk about—Miss Pelham." And already poor Arthur began to stumble and hesitate. "You *must* know all about it, Jack; how—how I've loved her ever since we met at the Point during my first class camp two years ago. It has got to be something mighty—mighty serious with me, and I'm afraid you've thought me unfriendly and forgetful of you of late; but it isn't that, Jack; I'm too miserable and unhappy to want to see anybody but—but her, and that only makes me worse. Everything is going wrong; I thought I had reason to hope; I was led to hope, Jack, but—it was all a mistake I reckon, and luck is dead against me here."

He stopped and looked appealingly towards the dimly-outlined figure in the neighboring chair. There was a moment's pause, and then Truscott's pipe was removed from his lips and he slowly spoke:

"Glenham, I have known it, of course,—that is, something of it. Do you mean now that you *want* me to know the whole story?"

"Yes, I do, Truscott, for I need your advice."

There was another pause, and then came the question:

"You say you were led to hope. Had you spoken of the matter to her before?"

"Yes, two years ago, at West Point."

"And she led you to hope then?"

"No, not at all; she was gentle and kind, but—but she was nothing more."

"Then how were you led to hope?"

"Mrs. Pelham, Jack, she talked to me two or three times, and told me that it was only because Grace was too young then, that it would all come right. That's why I applied for the —th, and was content to come in at the foot of the list. I'm no horseman; I'm only fit for the infantry, and ought to have gone in it."

"And since you have been here and at Prescott together, has there been nothing more favorable?"

"I thought so, and Mrs. Pelham declares it is so, but after this wretched morning—well, ever since Ray got here I've thought otherwise."

"Do you mean that you look upon Ray as a rival?"

"How can I help it, Jack? He carries the tassel of her fan in his vest-pocket. He was devoted to her every chance he got at Prescott, so he has been here, and this morning—this morning he saved her life, and you know it, and when I reached them—my God! he had her in his arms, and—oh, I can't tell you about it! She never moved even when I came."

Truscott winced as though a sharp knife had suddenly pierced him, and his voice was lower, deeper, than ever as he asked,—

"Do you think she cares for Ray?"

"I don't know. I can only judge by what I saw. Why, Truscott, I—I saw him kiss her, and she—well,

if she fancied him before, this morning's work has finished it. She owes her life to him."

Truscott sat a while in silence, then rose and slowly paced up and down the piazza. Presently Glenham joined him, and the two walked side by side.

"I don't know what to make of Mrs. Pelham, Truscott," said he. "She sent to reassure me, she said, and told me that while Grace might be grateful to Ray for rescuing her as he did, she would be far more touched by the infinite service I had done her brother. I asked her what she meant, and she replied that Ralph had confided to her that I had supplied him with a large sum of money to relieve him from great and pressing embarrassment. I swore I'd never done anything of the kind; and when she found I was in earnest, she asked me to forget that she had mentioned it, and to say nothing about it to any one; but she is so mysterious that I don't like it. What is she up to, do you think? My brain is addled to-night."

"Hard to say," replied Truscott, briefly. "Tell me this, Glenham, has she, Miss Pelham, ever alluded to her brother to you?"

"Never. She never does talk to me except on utterly matter-of-fact affairs. That's what grites me so. I know I'm far from being her equal mentally, but I'm not utterly a blockhead."

"Then as I understand you, Glenham, you think that but for Ray's interference you could hope for success?"

"Her mother says so, Jack, and I—I try to think so, but I can't get over the feeling that she—that she—well—almost pities me. She has so much character,

intellect, I suppose they call it, and I——” And here poor Glenham stopped short with almost a sob, and leaned drearily against one of the wooden pillars of the piazza. Truscott, too, ceased his promenade and stood beside him, puffing somewhat nervously at his meerschaum.

Then Glenham spoke again. “Jack, you have always been my best friend here, and I have learned to lean upon you. I want your advice. Do you think I have any chance with her?”

For a moment there was no reply; then it came, slowly, almost sadly.

“You have wealth and position, Glenham. You have the best wishes of her parents. She herself cannot but respect you and your honest love for her. I should say that the chances were in your favor; but, you said ‘advice.’ Do you mean it? Do you want to know just what I think of this affair?”

“Yes,” said Glenham, huskily.

“Then, in all candor, Arthur, I say to you, it is my belief that the man who marries a woman who either is, or who fancies she is, his mental superior, makes the fatal blunder of his life.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THAT Mrs. Pelham should fail to put in an appearance at the breakfast-table on the morning succeeding her tirade at the expense of Mr. Ray was a circumstance neither to be unexpected nor greatly deplored. It had frequently happened of late that the colonel and his daughter had been the only partakers of that meal, as we Americans are perforce condemned to designate those household gatherings whereat, be it breakfast or dinner, tea, supper, or luncheon, we thankfully consume our daily bread. I hate the word, yet what have we as a suitable equivalent? Repast is stilted, refection monastic, and refreshment applies equally to a bath or a "cocktail." Meal it must be in all its Anglo-Saxon ugliness until some gifted word-builder come to our rescue and evolve a term less objectionable.

The morning had dawned bright and beautiful, and Grace, whose sleep had been broken and troubled, rose with the sun, and busied herself noiselessly with a neglected diary and an equally neglected correspondence until the trumpets sounding first call for guard-mounting warned her that it was time to make her father's coffee. First, however, she tapped at her mother's door, and receiving no answer, softly opened it and peered in. Whether asleep or awake her ladyship gave no

indication, so Grace stole on tiptoe to the bedside. Her mother's eyes were closed, and to Grace's gentle inquiry as to how she had passed the night, and whether she would breakfast there, no reply was vouchsafed, so the girl quietly turned and left her. Breakfast over, she and her father had betaken themselves to the piazza and watched the guard as it passed in review. Then as the colonel walked over to his office to receive the report of the officer of the day, Mr. Truscott, in utter disregard of his established custom, came striding towards her. Ladies on the other galleries were as quick to notice it as Grace herself, and several pairs of inquisitive eyes followed his movements as he stopped before her and, raising his helmet in salutation, stood, with one foot resting upon the lower step, looking up into her face.

Oddly enough, her first impulse on seeing him approach was to retire within-doors and await his coming in the parlor. Glancing along the line, she could see that the unusual circumstance of the adjutant's going to greet her instead of direct to his own quarters had attracted wide attention. Her cheek flushed, and her eyes looked all the brighter in consequence; perhaps, too, she bit her scarlet lip in the effort to quiet the strange and tremulous emotion with which she marked this, the first overt act on his part since her arrival at Camp Sandy that savored of "attention" to her. Little as it might have been among the other officers, it meant something where Truscott was concerned. The instant he had returned sabre after passing the officer of the day, and before the guard had wheeled to left into line, he faced about and went to the spot where she stood,

and now here he was looking steadfastly up into her eyes.

"Are you sure you feel entirely equal to another ride this morning, Miss Pelham?" he asked.

"I am; and I shall not rest until I have subdued that scamp of a horse."

"Then, if the hour suit you, we will start at ten o'clock," he said, smiling at the determination of her manner. "I see you are eager to try conclusions with Ranger again, and there is nothing to prevent my starting early, provided I go at once to the office." And with that, suddenly as he came, he left her. She could hardly realize that he had been there at all. Turning to enter the house, she saw that Mrs. Tanner had stepped out upon her piazza, and Mrs. Tanner's eyes were fixed upon the retiring form of Mr. Truscott, who, without backward glance, was walking rapidly towards headquarters.

Only the day before, despite the vague distrust inspired by her mother's innuendoes, Grace had been won to the gentle-mannered little lady by the interest and attention she had shown her after the runaway. She wanted to greet her with a cordial "good-morning," but for a moment Mrs. Tanner absolutely did not seem to be aware of her presence, and once more the feeling of aversion struggled for the mastery. Grace seized the knob of the door and turned it sharply, even then looking back at her neighbor, and just as she did so Mrs. Tanner caught sight of her; a bright smile of recognition flashed over her face, and with a gesture of invitation she stepped blithely forward as though to speak. Grace Pelham simply bowed calmly, yes, coldly,

and entered the house; and Mrs. Raymond, two doors farther north, saw the whole thing, and went over at once to ask Mrs. Turner what she thought of it.

It was a "troop drill" morning, and at nine o'clock all the officers except the staff and the officer of the day were summoned to their commands. For two years previous drills of any kind had been the exception rather than the rule in the —th, for the entire regiment had been occupied incessantly in mountain and desert scouting. Now, however, Colonel Pelham had succeeded in assembling six of his companies at headquarters, and had inaugurated a system of instruction which promised well for the discipline and *morale* of the command. By half-past nine the flats to the north of the garrison were alive with blue-bloused troopers and gay with fluttering guidons, while the trumpets, softened by distance, floated their stirring skirmish-calls back to the spectators on the upper end of the parade; and here it was that most of the ladies had gathered to watch the lively evolutions up the valley.

Followed by his orderly the colonel himself had ridden past the group on his way to superintend the drills, and to note with practised and critical eye the work of his officers and men. And so it happened that when ten o'clock came and Mr. Truscott with the horses arrived at the Pelhams' door, not a lady in the garrison took note of the fact. Grace promptly appeared, was swung up into saddle before she realized that her foot was in his hand, and in another instant found herself riding at a quiet walk down the slope to the south, out of sight of the denizens of officers' row.

Beyond a quiet commendation of her punctuality and a request that she should "ride him on the snaffle," for a few moments Mr. Truscott had not spoken. He was narrowly watching Ranger's eye and the tapering, sensitive ears, which kept tilting back and forth in response to the varying emotions of that unrepentant quadruped. As for Grace, she sat as gracefully erect, as jauntily unconcerned to all appearance, as though the runaway of the day before were a matter of no earthly consequence; but her hand, light and low, felt warily the champing mouth, and the curb-rein lay within the pressure of her fingers, where a mere inch of a turn of the wrist would bring it into play. She noted that Truscott rode well forward, close to Ranger's head, noted the steady gaze of his dark eye, and a feeling of security stole over her. Ranger might curvet as he pleased, no movement could be too sudden for that vigilant watch or for that ready hand. Another moment and side by side the horses plunged breast-deep into the rapid waters of the Sandy, forded the stream, and disappeared among the willows on the eastern bank.

It must have been somewhere about eleven o'clock when Lady Pelham descended to the dining-room in quest of toast and tea. These not being entirely to her liking, she fussily wandered through her parlor for a few moments, tossing over the books and magazines as was her wont when mentally disturbed, and finally betaking herself to the piazza. Recall had sounded, and the troops were returning from drill. Some little distance up the row she saw her husband, seated on his horse, conversing with one or two officers.

She had not met him since the previous evening, and she was not eager to meet him now. That he was greatly incensed at her violent conduct of yesterday she felt morally certain; and whether she had bettered her cause, as she regarded Glenham's suit, she felt by no means assured. Presently the colonel came riding towards her, and she prepared herself to greet him as she thought might be most soothing to his ruffled feelings; but to her amaze and wrath he actually pulled up his horse the instant he caught sight of her, and then, with a most flagrant counterfeit of interest and cordiality,—so she deemed it,—he dismounted at Mrs Tanner's door-step, and, bidding the orderly take his horse to the stable, entered into a lively conversation with that lady, who, with Rosalie, was awaiting the return of the captain from drill. Angry again, and in good earnest, her ladyship marched within-doors and spent half an hour in the preparation of a lecture to be delivered on her lord's return. Then it occurred to her that she had not seen Grace since breakfast-time, when that dutiful daughter was tiptoeing out of the maternal bedroom. Inquiry of the housemaid resulted in the information that Miss Grace had gone riding.

“With whom?” asked Mrs. Pelham, shortly.

“Mr. Truscott, mum,” was the reply.

For an instant her ladyship stood transfixed. Then she abruptly left the room, mounted the stairs, took from her desk a letter she had received only a few days before, read it carefully over, thrust it in her pocket, and returned to the piazza. Colonel Pelham was still talking blithely to Mrs. Tanner, and the captain, hold-

ing Rosalie on his knee, was toying with the child's pretty hair. It made a cheery picture, that group at the neighboring quarters, and Mrs. Tanner, catching sight of her lonely ladyship, forgiving the slights and coldnesses she had received at her hands, rose, and, coming to the end of the gallery, invited the elder lady to come and join them, but retired in unmistakable mortification at the very discourteous manner in which her invitation was received. Pelham himself colored with indignation and speedily rose, bade them good-morning, and with a fixed determination to bring his wife to a realizing sense of the outrageous nature of her conduct, accosted her briefly with, "I have something to say to you, Dolly; come into the house," and led the way into the parlor. There he turned and faced her, and was surprised to note how preternaturally calm and complacent she looked.

"Sit down," he said, and without a word she obeyed. "I had grave reason to want to see you earlier this morning. Now I have still graver reason to claim your attention to what I have to say. Are you at leisure? Have you time now to listen to me?" he continued, striving to speak gently and quietly.

"I am entirely at your service, Colonel Pelham," was the stately reply.

"Very well, then," and as he spoke he paced slowly up and down the floor. "Yesterday you saw fit to behave with infinite discourtesy and rudeness to Mr. Ray, my guest, at dinner,—a gentleman whom I have every reason to regard highly personally, and an officer of whom the regiment is proud. Yesterday morning"—and here his voice began to tremble—"he saved your

daughter's life. Last evening you actually insulted him at our table. The reasons you gave were frivolous, if not absolute falsifications. I trust that a night of reflection has taught you the propriety of your making amends to him as well as to Grace in the near future." He paused and looked at her. She was seated placidly in the easy-chair, her hard eyes fixed on a tiny statuette on the mantel. She never looked more imperturbable in her life, and he could not understand it. The mere fact that he should have been allowed to address a few score of words of reproof to her uninterrupted was in itself so unusual as to be absolutely disconcerting. She answered not a word. So he went on again: "Ten minutes ago, in my presence, you rudely, very rudely rejected a courteous invitation from Mrs. Tanner. I have seen other instances of your discourtesy to her, but nothing so glaring as this, and now I have called you here to listen to my opinion of your conduct——"

"One moment, Colonel Pelham," she calmly spoke.

"Hey?" he stammered, amazed at the placidity of her tone and manner.

"One moment, I say. Let me suggest that before you proceed to wither me by your remarks upon my so-called rudeness to Mrs.—to the person you have mentioned, it might be as well to be sure of your ground. You propose calling me to account because I repel, have repelled, and shall repel" (now she began to warm up to her work) "every attempt of that woman to seek my society. Be sure of your ground, colonel. Do—you—*know* Mrs. Tanner, do you think?" And with uplifted eyebrows and insinuating accents her ladyship looked into his flushed and astonished face.

"Know her? Of course I do! There isn't a more thorough lady in the regiment. What devil's nonsense is this you are driving at? What do you mean to—to—hint or say? Speak out. I hate these feminine slurs. Who has dared malign her to you? or what do you dare say against her?"

"*Dare!* Colonel Pelham. *Dare!* I warn you to guard your temper. I pass over what you said regarding my manner to Mr. Ray. *That* need not be touched upon now, but it is high time you were made aware of the character of the woman you desire to force upon my acquaintance and your innocent daughter's. More than that, if you cannot see the desperate recklessness of allowing such men as Ray and Truscott to monopolize your child's society and to go riding alone with her through the seclusion of this out-of-the-way neighborhood, I can and do, and as her mother I protest against it. You hate feminine slurs, you say; then beware lest the slurs of the whole garrison follow Grace, innocent as she is, as they have followed Mrs. Tanner, innocent as she is not!"

"Stop right there," said Pelham. "Before you go one point further give me your authority for your insinuations against Mrs. Tanner, that I may judge whether it be even worth my while to hear a specific statement." And his voice was harsh and strained, his eye troubled.

"Your past experience *ought* to have told you that I never made an allegation I could not substantiate," said madame, majestically ("It hasn't, by a—gulp—good deal," said the colonel, *sotto voce*), "but you pay no attention to my warnings. I tell you no idle gossip.

Ask any lady in the garrison, any lady in the regiment, ay, any lady in Arizona, how Mrs. Tanner stands, and you will then begin to believe me. My 'authority' is legion, Colonel Pelham."

"Then of what do you accuse her?" he demanded, wheeling sharply about and again confronting her.

"Of shameful or shameless (as you please) conduct with an officer in this regiment during her husband's absence in the field."

"Trash and nonsense! I don't believe a word of it"

"Ask any lady in the garrison."

"I wouldn't believe one of them against her. The whole thing is some vile concoction of jealous and malignant women, who envy her the respect in which she is held. By the eternal! Mrs. Pelham, you will do well to keep out of such infernal garrison scandal as this! You *would* do well to——"

"Copy after her, I suppose you mean to say! Copy after *her*, colonel! Now listen——"

But listen he would not. The crunching of hoofs was heard on the gravelly road in front, and through the blinds he had caught sight of Grace and Truscott on their return. He stepped eagerly to the door, but even before he could reach the piazza the adjutant had thrown his reins to the orderly and lightly swung her from the saddle. A soft flush was mantling her fair cheek, and the brilliant eyes seemed bathed in a dewy light as she glanced up from under the fringing lashes to thank her escort. Even as he came forth to greet them the colonel could not but note how radiant was her beauty, and how earnest, how grave and reverent

was Truscott's manner as he bent low over the shyly tendered hand.

"It has been such a lovely ride, Mr. Truscott," she said, "and I'm sure Ranger could not have gone better."

"It has been a lovely ride to me, Miss Pelham," he replied; "and I hope for others yet to come, may I not?" he asked, and as he asked he—he could not have been thinking as he stood gazing down into her face—retained in his the slender hand he had taken, and for an instant it did not seem to her at all an unusual thing; then she suddenly but gently withdrew it, and her color deepened as she answered,—

"Yes, indeed; I will ride with you gladly."

And Mrs. Pelham, noting every look and word, set her teeth and muttered, "Not one more if *I* know it."

"Come to lunch, Truscott," called the colonel; "we never see you nowadays. Come, man."

And Truscott looked first towards her, a quick, flitting glance, but though she spoke no word, he thought he could read a second invitation in the sweet eyes that for one instant met his own.

"I will come, colonel, with pleasure," he answered. "Let me sign those papers on my desk, and I will be here in fifteen minutes."

Then Colonel Pelham re-entered the parlor. Grace darted up-stairs to change her dress, and Lady Pelham turned sharply from the window to meet her lord.

"You have asked Mr. Truscott here to lunch?" she inquired.

"Certainly I have," said he, stung by the indescribable tone of her query.

"You consider Mr. Truscott a suitable escort for

your daughter, and a fit person to invite to your table, I suppose?"

"Suppose!" he broke forth, flushing with indignation and annoyance. "Suppose! Look here, Dolly, this is becoming insupportable. Last night it was Ray. To-day, Truscott, my adjutant, the best officer and most thorough gentleman in the regiment. What has got into you? You of all others ought to welcome him. You know he has been the means of saving Ralph. You——"

"I know nothing of the kind. We owe everything to Mr. Glenham where Ralph is concerned, though Mr. Truscott would, doubtless, like to arrogate all that to himself. What I *do* know is this, that your paragon of an adjutant is the man to whom Mrs. Tanner owes her fall——"

She stopped suddenly, trembling at her own audacity, at the force and outrage of the blow she had struck, and at the horror and amaze in his face. For an instant she longed to unsay, at least to qualify her words, to avert from herself the consequences she felt sure would result from the vile exaggeration of which she had been guilty. The expression in his face frightened her. At first he glared with anger; then, little by little, the color died away. Incredulity, pity, contempt, one after another, shone in the steady eyes which never left her face. At last, with a shrug of his shoulders, a "pa-a-h!" of utter disgust, he turned coldly and deliberately away. At the door he paused.

"I *thought* the whole thing was a lie before. *Now* I know it."

She fairly rushed towards him. "You shall *not* go

until you have heard all. You must hear it now. You say"—seizing his arm—"you would believe no lady in this garrison. The time was when you used to hold Mrs. Treadwell up to me as the model of all an army wife should be. Perhaps you would ignore her opinion?"

"Mrs. Treadwell would never be mixed up in any such disgraceful business as the circulation of such a story," he answered, coldly.

"But it *was* Mrs. Treadwell," she panted. "She herself who saw—who discovered the whole thing. She who warned the others that what they suspected was—was true."

"You have been told this, perhaps," he said, weary of the matter and of her, striving to pull away from her grasp; "but these women's yarns are too malicious, too utterly base and baseless to be listened to. I don't believe Mrs. Treadwell ever said such a thing."

"You wouldn't believe it, I suppose, if she herself were to write and tell you."

"She never would write such a thing."

"*Wouldn't* she, Colonel Pelham? Read that." And her ladyship forced into his hand the letter she had secreted in her pocket. Barely glancing at the superscription, he thrust it aside.

"I will not read it. It is—well, it *may* be hers, of course, but I do not desire to see it."

"See or hear it you must. You accuse and believe me guilty of slander and malice. I tell you that the proof of my words is here. Be just, Colonel Pelham. I have some rights in this matter."

Wearily his head bent forward on his breast, and his

hands clinched in the paroxysm of disgust that had seized him.

"Read, if you must," he said, finally ; "I will hear what she has to say." And read she did, slowly, emphatically, what follows.

"FORT HAYS, KANSAS, December 7, 18—.

"Your letter of the 23d ult. reached me yesterday, my dear Mrs. Pelham, and I am greatly distressed at its contents. You give me to understand that recent events have revived a story that I had hoped was long since forgotten, and you indicate that for your daughter's sake it is necessary that you should know just what I know or saw. It is inexpressibly painful to me to have to write upon such a subject, and that I do so at all is due, first, to your urgent appeal on Grace's account ; second, to the fact that I believe you have heard a most exaggerated statement of what took place at Fort Phoenix. Under these circumstances I yield to your request.

"Mr. Truscott arrived suddenly at Phoenix. Captain Tanner's quarters adjoined ours, and for a month or more Mrs. Tanner and I had been on terms of intimacy. I felt for her a warm and constantly-growing friendship, even admiration, and had been in the daily habit of running in to see her at any hour, never thinking of knocking at the door. Hearing of Mr. Truscott's arrival and knowing how warm a regard she and her husband entertained for him, I dropped my work and hurried in to tell her, as I supposed, of his presence. The front door was open, the parlor-door partially so, and, as I entered hastily, I could not but see

what I did. Mrs. Tanner was sobbing in his arms as he stood facing the door, her back was towards me, and she was looking up into his face, he down into hers. Neither of them observed me, and I withdrew at once.

"Two weeks afterwards, to my infinite regret, I, in strict confidence, told what I had seen to a lady now no longer with the regiment. She had heard some very cruel rumors, and—well, I cannot justify my action at all. I told her, and, beyond all doubt, the story has reached you in hideously expanded form. Beyond this I know nothing, and I beg that you will do all in your power to suppress any mention of even this that I have told you.

"It is hard to believe, but you compel me to believe that what took place at Phoenix was but the preface to the recent events you allude to. With all my heart I hope that all may be satisfactorily explained. She was my ideal of a true woman, and Colonel Treadwell thought *him* a perfect gentleman and soldier.

"I have no heart to write of ordinary news or gossip. You will, of course, welcome the order relieving you from duty in Arizona and bringing you all East. Give much love to Grace, and tell her how I wish I could see her now. We have heard so much about her from Mr. Sprague and Mr. Walker of last year's class. You do not mention Mr. Glenham, and they did.

"Very sincerely yours,

"E. G. TREADWELL."

During the reading of this letter Colonel Pelham had stood motionless. Little by little the lines upon his brow grew deeper, and his mouth set firm and

rigid. An ashy gray replaced the flush on face and forehead. He passed his hand wonderingly once or twice across his eyes, and at last stretched it forth.

"Let me see that one moment," he said; and, taking it, he glanced over the pages, scrutinized the signature, and then, with an irrepressible shudder, handed it back.

She stood in silence before him. Well she knew that now it was no time to speak. The blow had struck home. She watched him as again he passed his hand along his forehead in that dazed, almost helpless manner, and at last in a voice hoarse and strange he spoke:

"Say no word of this to any one. I—I shall think it all over. There is—there must be some mistake, some explanation. Do you mean," he asked, with sudden vehemence, "that they assert worse than this of her—of him?"

"They do," was her answer. And without a word he turned and left the house. Going to the side-windows, she followed him with her eyes. With bent head and slow, uncertain steps he walked a few yards towards his office, whither the adjutant had gone, but, as though suddenly recollecting himself, he turned abruptly and went to the bluff-side east of the post. There she lost sight of him, and with vague uneasiness she left the parlor and sought her room. Presently Grace's voice, blithe, low, and happy, was heard. The sweet words of a favorite song came floating back through the hallway, and her light footsteps went dancing down the stairs and into the empty parlor. "More like herself than she has been for days," thought the mother, as she listened to the thrill and gladness that rose in every

mellow note. Were her efforts, then, all in vain? Had she been too unwary in her guard? Had she allowed her, after all, to become interested in this man, and that, too, when fortune, position, independence, luxury, lay at her feet? Bathing her hot face in lavender-water, her ladyship stood in deep anxiety, even distress, before her mirror. She had seen nothing of Glenham that morning; he had not even come to inquire after Grace. What could that mean? Then how had it happened, too, that, despite all her warnings, Grace had gone riding with Truscott? She could not control her annoyance. Down she went into the parlor to investigate. It was the first meeting of mother and daughter that day, for Grace still believed that her mother had been asleep when she entered her room before breakfast. The girl had by no means forgotten her ladyship's conduct of the previous day, and her kiss of greeting, though dutiful, was not warm and loving as of yore. Her song, too, ceased the instant she heard the stairs creaking under the maternal weight.

"You look unusually well, Grace," madame deigned to say. "I was not aware that you proposed riding again to-day, much less that you would ride with Mr. Truscott."

"I went to your room to tell you, mother, but you were asleep. As for riding with Mr. Truscott, that was father's doing, and I have to thank him for a very pleasant morning."

Something in the calm glance of her daughter's fearless eyes awed yet provoked her ladyship. Had it come to this, that Grace, always so docile, dutiful, and yielding before, was now asserting independence of the

mother's counsel or control? It stung her all the more, doubled her resentment to realize that her own conduct had been such as to warrant, even to dictate, the withdrawal of much of the trust and deference that was a mother's due. She struggled a moment with the feeling of pride and love evoked by her daughter's radiant beauty as she stood before her. But the thought of all that was at stake nerved her to other efforts.

"Have you forgotten, then, the warnings you have received as to Mr. Truscott?"

"I have forgotten nothing, mother. I simply cannot and do not believe what you have heard; and I cannot help liking a man who has been so true a friend to Ralph."

"What do you know, pray, of his relations to Ralph?"

"Nothing but what Ralph's letters have told me, of course, and what he himself admitted to-day——"

"What did he admit? How did you come to speak of such a thing?" asked Mrs. Pelham, alarmed and angry.

"I do not remember what he said, mother. I do not know that he admitted anything. I was talking of Ralph and of Ralph's last letter to me, and—and you know how gratefully he wrote of Mr. Truscott. How could I help telling him how glad I was that Ralph had found so good a friend? Ralph said he owed everything to Mr. Truscott. And—well, he really did not say anything except to protest that he was only too glad to be of any service to father's boy, but that really he had done nothing deserving of any thanks."

"Then he *had* the conscience to admit that! Why could he not have gone further and told you what he perfectly well knew,—*who* it was to whom all our thanks were due, our unspeakable gratitude, in fact?"

Grace opened her eyes in wonderment, but before she could reply the tramping of feet was heard on the piazza, and the hall-door burst open.

"Come right in, Truscott," she heard her father say; and the colonel, holding an open telegraphic despatch in his hand, hastily entered, followed by the adjutant. The latter bowed silently to the ladies, the former threw himself into a chair, and, with perplexity and some little trace of excitement on his face, read through the closely-written page. Then he looked up.

"Two troops to start at once, Truscott. Can we get scouts down from the reservation by sunset?"

"An orderly can go at once, sir. Shall I send the order?"

"Yes; we want twenty of their best." And Mr. Truscott disappeared.

"What is it, colonel?" demanded Mrs. Pelham. "What is wrong? Another outbreak?"

"The general directs me to send out a command to hunt up the Apaches in the Tonto basin," he replied shortly, "and he may be down here himself."

"Who will have to go?" she asked, anxiously.

"Who? Oh, I don't know. It goes according to roster. Truscott keeps that," he answered, rising and pacing up and down the floor. "I'm sorry, too," he said, more to himself than to her. "I'm sorry, for now or never is the time to nab this band of Eski-

minzin's, and—I'd like to select the officer to command. Some men have no idea of handling Indians."

"Who are the best for such duty?" persisted madame.

"They're all good, Dolly; they're all good so far as zeal and that sort of thing goes," he answered, impatiently, "only Tanner or Raymond or some of the youngsters like Ray and Stryker, seem to have better luck—or something. I wish this were Tanner's detail."

"So does Mr. Truscott, no doubt," was the dry rejoinder. And looking sharply, angrily at her, the colonel stopped short in his walk, and was about to speak, when the sight of Grace's troubled face restrained him. Another moment, and Truscott knocked and re-entered.

"Whose companies are first for detail?" asked Pelham, the instant he appeared.

"Tanner's and Ray's, sir," was the quiet, prompt reply.

Despite his effort the colonel started, and the color leaped to his forehead. Madame gave an audible gasp.

"I thought Tanner—at least I understood that Raymond's company had been longer in garrison than Captain Tanner's," he said.

"Tanner's only went to the reservation on this last scout, colonel," answered the adjutant, very respectfully, "and Raymond's has been out twice since August."

"True. I had forgotten it. I'm heartily glad that it is Tanner's turn; he is the very man to settle this business. Well, notify them at once, Truscott, then come to lunch. I declare I had forgotten it. I would like to see Tanner myself; as soon as possible, though,

if you will tell him." And bowing again, the adjutant withdrew.

Mrs. Pelham had insinuated that Mr. Truscott would be glad that it was Captain Tanner's detail for scouting duty. Very far from glad did Mr. Truscott look as he knocked at Captain Tanner's door. It was opened by little Rosalie herself, her face all beaming with smiles when she caught sight of her friend. Jack bent and raised her in his arms, tenderly kissing the bonny cheek. "Run and tell papa Uncle Jack wants to see him," he said, as he set her down; and as she trotted away he seated himself at the window and covered his face with his hands, his elbows resting on his knees. The dejection of his attitude struck Tanner the instant he entered, but before he could speak the adjutant rose.

"What news, Jack?"

"Another scout; you to command; start to-night." And the two men looked into one another's eyes without a word for a moment. Then Truscott held forth his hand and took that of his friend.

"The thing has been worrying me ever since Craig and Fanshawe got in. I knew the chief would be apt to send out detachments from here, and—the detail would come on you—just at this time."

"It is what I expected," said Tanner; "but it is pretty rough to have it come just now."

"Does Mrs. Tanner know?" asked Truscott.

"No, she hasn't heard, though the other ladies in the garrison seemed to know all about it; but she never goes anywhere, and I could not bear to tell her until it became a certainty. To-night, do you say?" he asked, suddenly.

"Yes, to-night," said Truscott, sadly. "I suppose you will have to start soon after sunset."

"And it was just at tattoo that—that baby died, five years ago. It will come hard to her; that's all that troubles me."

And for all answer Truscott could only press his hand.

"The colonel wants to see you as soon as possible; he is home now. Tanner, I wish to heaven I could take this detail for you. Won't you let me tell him? Raymond would be only too glad to go; and there's Ray, who goes anyhow. He knows every inch of that country, and it would be a splendid thing for him if he could have the command."

"Tell nobody, Jack. I never shirked a duty, big or little, yet, and I won't now. If it were not for poor Nellie I wouldn't ask anything better than this chance at old 'Skiminzin. It is the breaking it to her I dread. She's up-stairs now with—with the little one's shoes and stockings. She thought I did not see her get them from the baby trunk, but I did. My God, Jack! it's breaking it to her that upsets me. I'll go and see the colonel first." And taking his forage-cap, Tanner and Truscott went forth together, the latter crossing the parade and proceeding to the camp in rear of the garrison. It was after one o'clock, after lunch-time. The mess-room of the bachelor officers was deserted, as he could see. Several of the juniors—Crane, Dana, and Hunter—were grouped around the doorway of the court-martial room awaiting the arrival of the other members of the court, then trying some cases among the enlisted men, but none of them had seen Ray; he had not been

to lunch, had not been seen since morning drill. Truscott said nothing, but continued on his way towards camp until he had passed beyond the company quarters, then turning sharp to his left, he rapidly descended the hill and took the shortest cut for "the store."

"Good-day, Mr. Truscott," exclaimed the barkeeper, as he entered. "Don't often see you down here, sir," he went on, eager to be civil to the officer who represented so much influence and power at headquarters. "Looking for anybody?" he asked, as Truscott's keen glance took in the other occupants of the main room, then wandered to the green-baize door of the card-room beyond.

"Who are in there?" he briefly asked, in a low tone, as he noted the silence that had fallen upon the group of packers and quartermaster's men who were loafing about.

The barkeeper winked confidentially, and whispered, "Little game going on. Some of the boys down from Prescott. The doctor's there, and Ray and Wilkins."

"Tell Mr. Ray I want to see him, around at the side-door," said Truscott, and left the room.

In another moment Ray had joined him, and Ray's face was flushed and his eyes glassy.

"What's up, Jack?" he queried.

"Scout, and you're wanted instanter," said Jack, gravely.

"Hurrah for hurrah! Who is it this time?"

"Eskiminzin, I believe. It's over your old stamping-ground. Tonto basin, anyway."

"Bully! When do we light out?"

"This evening. No time to be lost. Better come up and get your men ready right off."

Ray hesitated and looked grave. "By Jove, Jack, that's bad! I dropped a month's pay last night, and now the luck's just beginning to turn. I want to quit even if I can, but this scout business knocks it. D—n the odds, though! I'm better out roughing it than fooling around here, where I'm only in the way. Who else goes?" he asked, suddenly.

"Tanner and you with your troops and some twenty Apache-Mohaves."

"What subs? Don't Glenham go?"

"Probably not, as he is Canker's only assistant now. Why should he?"

"Oh, I don't know, only if I were in his place I'd want to. I'll be up in ten minutes, Jack." And with that Mr. Ray returned to the card-room to wind up his connection with the game, and Truscott went direct to his colonel's.

"What the mischief does Ray mean?" thought he, as he walked rapidly along. "He has been drinking, to be sure, but knows well enough what he is about. 'If I were in Glenham's place I'd want to go.' What *does* he mean?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE duty performed of notifying the troop commanders of their detail, Mr. Truscott proceeded at once to rejoin the colonel, and found Captain Tanner just leaving.

"I am very sorry you will not stay and lunch with us," Pelham was saying, "but I understand well enough that you will want every moment of your time. I shall be out to see you off, though, and shall hope to meet you again meantime." Then, as the captain walked away and Grace smilingly welcomed Truscott and slipped her hand within her father's arm as though to call his attention to the fact that luncheon was waiting, the latter stood gazing after Tanner's receding form.

"The more I see of that man the more I like him," he said, musingly. "He is one of the most soldierly fellows I ever met; and yet, do you know, Truscott, it seemed to me that he was anything but glad of this detail?" And the colonel turned and faced his adjutant, Grace still resting her hand upon his arm.

Before he could collect his thoughts for the reply evidently expected of him, Mr. Truscott became aware of the fact that Mrs. Pelham had suddenly appeared at the hall-door and was intently regarding him. His hesitation instantly attracted the colonel's attention.

"Has he any reason for not wishing to go?" he

asked, and there was an unusual tone as of annoyance in his voice, something sharp and unnatural.

Truscott colored slightly, but spoke slowly and calmly in reply. Involuntarily he glanced at Grace, and was surprised at the intent expression with which her eyes, too, were fixed upon him. Instantly, however, she looked away.

"Nothing, colonel, that he would allow to stand in the way of his going. Indeed, he will not thank me for admitting that the detail was in the least unwelcome."

"Then you know he would rather not leave the post just at this time, do you, Mr. Truscott?" asked Mrs. Pelham, with a calm deliberation that perplexed him for days after, as again and again her manner recurred to him.

"Captain Tanner would welcome this duty very much at any other time, madame," was the answer; "but while it is hard for him to go at this time, he would consider it most unfriendly in me to allude to it with any view to having another take his place."

"Ah, I see that you are very jealous of the *rights* of your friends. Some people, I fancy, would not thank you for such efforts in their behalf." And the caustic emphasis on the words was so marked that the colonel turned sharply upon her.

"What earthly business is it of yours, Mrs. Pelham? Truscott is perfectly right. Now *do* hold your tongue, and don't interfere with what is solely my affair. Let's go to lunch."

"You will excuse me, please," said her ladyship, with majestic dignity, looking at nobody at all. "I

am going to Mrs. Raymond's." And with that she swept across the piazza and up the row.

"Mother breakfasted very late," said Grace, apologetically, as she led the way to the dining-room, "and she rarely takes luncheon." But whether she took luncheon or not, her absence on this particular occasion was readily forgiven.

All the same, something akin to constraint had fallen upon the trio. The colonel had hoped to hear from Truscott a prompt disclaimer of any knowledge of a reason for Tanner's not desiring to go on the scout just ordered, so, too, had Grace; but, to the vague distress of both, he had virtually admitted that he *knew* of a reason, and would not disclose the nature thereof. Despite his efforts at cheery conversation, the colonel could not drive from his thoughts the effect of that strange letter of Mrs. Treadwell's, and despite his long acquaintance with his wife's reckless language at the expense of any man or woman to whom she took a dislike, her words of the morning had powerfully, painfully impressed him. All unconscious of the thoughts in his colonel's perplexed head, Mr. Truscott felt certain that something had gone very wrong with the chief within the past twenty-four hours, and, for his own part, he found himself constantly oppressed with the contemplation of the effect the orders would have upon Mrs. Tanner. He strove to shut out the sorrowful picture and to fittingly respond to Grace's efforts at being entertaining, but here, too, the effort was evident. What could it all mean? Ray's mysterious words about Glenham, Mrs. Pelham's extraordinary language and manner, the colonel's spasmodic struggles to be

cheery, and, above all, Grace's odd, constrained replies to any allusion to Captain or Mrs. Tanner. Truscott was indeed puzzled. Verily, a cloud seemed to have fallen upon the house, and it was with absolute relief that the trio heard a quick, light footstep on the piazza, and the chirrupy voice of Mr. Ray inquiring for the colonel and the ladies. They rose and met him in the parlor.

Bright as a button looked that young gentleman as he blithely greeted them. Even Jack, accustomed as he was to the mercurial changes of his comrade, was unprepared to see him so radiant; but a cold plunge-bath, a change of raiment, and the enlivening prospect of the work before him had chased away all vestige of his morning's dissipation, and Mr. Ray was to all appearances the jolliest man in the garrison.

"I have just left Captain Tanner, colonel, and I wanted to come in to see you and Miss Grace before shedding my regimentals and getting into war-paint, which must be in an hour from now. Jack, I've been to your quarters, and Glenham, who's in the dumps about something, said you were here. Everybody knows we're going by this time, and Glenham is ready to cry because it isn't his turn. Colonel," he exclaimed, suddenly, "may I see you a few moments? Please excuse me, Miss Grace. It is my only opportunity." And with that Truscott and Grace were left alone.

On the centre-table were two photograph albums, one bound in Russia leather and stamped with the letters G. P. in monogram.

"May I look at this?" he asked.

"Certainly," she replied; yet, as he opened it, she made an involuntary move as though to check him.

The first portrait was a cabinet-sized photograph of Mr. Glenham in his cadet uniform. For a moment Truscott gazed quietly at it without saying a word, but the tired look she had marked before when at Prescott had stolen over his forehead and eyes. Why should she excuse the prominence of that picture to him? Why make any explanation at all? He had said nothing; but Grace, coloring vividly, looked up in his face.

"The album was a Christmas present from Mr. Glenham, two years ago," she said, hurriedly, confusedly. "That is where he placed his own picture."

"I did quite as boyish a thing, two years ago, Miss Gracie," said he, very quietly, while an amused but by no means satirical smile appeared under the curling moustache. "It is a most natural thing that he should seek to be first with you," he added, gravely, and the dark hazel eyes looked steadily into her face as the words fell from his lips. No wonder that the deep-fringed eyelids drooped at once beneath the searching glance. Her color deepened, and she knew not what to say. *He* knew that his words were tantamount to an impertinence, and yet, they had escaped him before he had weighed their meaning; he who usually weighed every word. He felt at once that, unexplained, his last remark was unjustifiable. He knew well that there was only one explanation which would condone such a solecism in a woman's eyes; and he knew well that now, despite the estrangement of the past few weeks, broken only by the sweet memory of the yesterday's ride, despite the open hostility of Mrs. Pelham, despite all rumors of her engagement to young Glenham, he loved, and loved her dearly.

Instantly he realized that in this ill-judged speech he had done injustice to himself; possibly, nay, probably, had offended her. The strong hand upon the album trembled visibly; he stood for an instant, silent, gazing with beating heart upon the drooping head and slender figure before him. In the adjoining room the deep voice of the colonel and the eager, energetic tones of Mr. Ray could be heard in earnest conversation, but in the parlor all was still. Oh, that dangerous silence! How many an avowal has it precipitated! Grace! Grace! where is your tact, your presence of mind? Why do you not break the spell? Is it—can it be that you have penetrated the veil of his reserve; that you divine his thoughts; and that your woman's heart craves the confession of his love?

Impulsively he steps to her side, his dark eyes glowing, his lips firmly set; but as he speaks his voice is low and tremulous, and a thrill of delight flashes through every nerve as she hears it.

"Forgive me, forgive me, Miss Gracie. I had no right; I did not mean to let such a speech escape me——"

"I do not blame you. It was—why—everybody remarks it, I suppose," she broke forth desperately, incoherently; "but the fault is not mine." And once again the shapely head drooped upon her breast.

"Then it does *not* mean that he is foremost in—— No. Do not answer me until you hear more. I have no right to question." He spoke hurriedly and low. Then with a sudden gesture he threw back his proud head and stood gallantly before her. "It is your right to know my reasons, to know why I so far forgot my—

self as to speak of such a thing as Mr. Glenham's relations with yourself. I had not thought to startle you so rudely, but, come what may, I can brook this uncertainty no longer, for, with all my heart and soul, I love you, I love you."

Both her slender hands are resting on the table now, as once again he bends eagerly over her. The room seems whirling round. She has heard, and a glorious, thrilling joy has seized upon her. She cannot speak. She dare not raise her eyes to his, yet she can almost hear the throbbing of his strong heart, and it finds its echo in her own. The next instant she knows that his firm hand is clasped upon hers; that he is waiting, waiting for her words. Slowly she lifts her queenly head, not yet daring to look up into the fervent love in the dark eyes gazing so yearningly upon her. She tries to speak, but all too late. Back from the dining-room, jubilant, beaming, absolutely detestable in his exuberant good spirits and undesirable presence, comes Mr. Ray.

"It's all right, Jack; the colonel says that Glenham may go with us provided Captain Canker will permit. Use your influence with him like a good fellow. Let's go and see him now." Then Mr. Ray falters. He has had time to note the surging color in Miss Pelham's temples, the deep glow in Truscott's eyes, the unmistakable embarrassment of the former, the preternatural gravity of the latter. "Oh!" he continues, irrelevantly, as the gladness suddenly dies from his face and a wistful expression takes its place. "You have a raft of other things to attend to, I suppose. I'll go; and I won't say good-by now, Miss Pelham."

With that he vanishes, and the colonel himself appears.

"It seems that Glenham is eager to go with Tanner's command, Truscott, so if Captain Canker has no objections I shall detail him." He faltered a bit, looking somewhat nervously at Grace's brilliant color as he spoke, but her cheek never paled, as he half expected to see it. "You might see Glenham and Canker also," he continued, and the adjutant promptly took his forage-cap. Grace glanced hurriedly, timidly up into his face as he half turned towards the door, then impulsively extended her hand. One instant they met, the strong, sinewy brown hand and hers, so white and fragile. One instant she looked up into his eyes, and then with wild, exultant, joyous heart, he hastened on his mission. In that thrilling instant he had read his answer, and was satisfied.

Meantime, where was Arthur Glenham, and how was it that during this entire day he had not once appeared at the colonel's quarters?

During the troop drill of the morning Mr. Ray, dismounting his men for a five minutes' rest after a half-hour of sharp exercise, was occupying himself in a comparison of the different company commanders. Well over to the west of the plain Captain Turner's chestnut sorrels and Tanner's bright bays were having an enlivening though impromptu competitive drill. It was pretty generally conceded that these two troops were very evenly matched, and, except among the partisans of other companies, it was as generally agreed that they were much ahead of the rest of the regiment in point of snap and style in drill. Both captains were

fine instructors and individually liked and respected by their men; whereas Canker, who really had enjoyed finer opportunities for keeping his men up to a moderate degree of proficiency, never could succeed in making anything out of them. He studied hard, he worked faithfully, he even furtively watched the methods of such officers as Tanner and Truscott, and strove to profit by what he learned in this way; but the cavalry officer is born, not made; and, handicapped as he was with the disadvantages of a bad seat, a bad hand, and a very bad temper, Canker found it all up-hill work. He had fine material in his company, but was desperately unpopular among them, so much so that none would re-enlist with him on the expiration of their terms of service, but would "take on," as they expressed it, with other troops, notably Tanner's and Turner's. Ray's, too, was a favorite command since he had been placed in charge; but its captain, now on recruiting service, had been very inefficient, and since his departure much of its time had been spent in mountain-scouting, where drills were unknown and discipline lax. It was Canker's habit, when betrayed into speaking of the matter at all, to say that "the secret of the superiority of Tanner's company was that he got his best men from me;" but in the depths of his heart he knew that statement to be absurd. It did not help him much to hear, as he did hear, in the inexplicable way in which such things are brought to our ears (who was it that said no man ever yet was so poor but that he had friends to tell him unpleasant truths about himself, or words to that effect?) that his men said that all they needed to make them the best-drilled

troop in the —th was to have a captain who was capable of teaching them something. Altogether, drill-time was a sort of purgatory to both officers and men in Canker's troop, and this morning was no exception. Ray quickly marked the sullen look of the faces along the line as they came trotting past him, the horses seeming as worried and jaded as the men; and as they halted and dismounted near him, it was easy enough for him to divine that Canker had been more than usually eruptive from the fact that Mr. Glenham kept at a distance from his captain, and stood moodily kicking at the turf. Mr. Ray himself, as has been hinted, had spent the greater part of the night in the card-room at the store, to the detriment of his pocket, but in no wise to that of his sunny temperament. He knew well that he had been vastly in Glenham's way of late, and the consciousness of the fact made him all the more ready to condone the young fellow's distant and constrained manner. Just now the dejection of Glenham's whole attitude struck him forcibly. "I hate to see him look so glum," he muttered. "Great Scott! if I had half his money, and a six-months' leave, and the wings of a dove, I'd be off for the States so quick that—— Hold on; would I, though, so long as she is here? That's where he's anchored; where I'd be, too, if I had the ghost of a show. 'Pon my soul, I believe I'll go and give him a lift after drill." And with another lingering look at his unconscious comrade, who had by this time thrown himself prone upon the ground, Mr. Ray remounted, and presently his animated voice was heard glibly expounding on the text of "centre forward."

Drill over, he sought Glenham's quarters, and found the junior officer kicking off boots and spurs in the rear room. There was no especial cordiality or welcome in the latter's voice as he said, "That you, Ray? Sit down. I'll be there in a moment."

"No hurry, Glenham," replied the other, with breezy good nature. "I want to glance over Truscott's *Nation*. Got anything to drink?"

"There's bottled beer in the sideboard, but I'm afraid it's too warm. Jack has some undeniable whiskey, if you prefer that."

"Where's it at?" said Mr. Ray, briefly, and falling unconsciously into the vernacular of the Blue-Grass region.

"Lower shelf. There's bitters and sugar somewhere there, unless Bucketts cleaned us out last night. He and Jack were owling. Excuse me, please, Ray; I can't."

"Sensible boy! May you never know what it is to feel a hankering for a cocktail!" And the tinkle of glass and stirring of spoon indicated that the gentleman from Kentucky was preparing some such beverage on his own account.

Presently Glenham emerged from his bedroom and found Ray placidly smoking, stretched at full length in Truscott's great canvas chair.

"Glenham," said he, "I've come in to talk with you a while. I'm no hand at beating round the bush, and want to go straight at it. Are you busy?"

"No," said Glenham, hesitatingly.

"Then sit down; I won't keep you long." And Glenham wonderingly obeyed

For a moment there was silence, Ray puffing nervously at his pipe. Then he laid it upon the table and leaned forward.

"Glenham," he spoke, and his voice was singularly soft and gentle, almost as though he were speaking to a woman. "I think a misunderstanding worse than an open rupture; and for some time past, you who used to like me better, I believe, than you did any man in the regiment but Truscott, have been cold and constrained in your manner towards me. I am not going to ask you why. I know well enough, and I don't blame you. Whatever may be the result of what I have to say to you, there shall be no excuse for further misunderstanding. It may not result in the restoration of your friendship for me, but it will relieve you from any indecision or embarrassment. Pardon me, now, if I speak of a very delicate matter. We all know that you are very much attached to Miss Pelham. Indeed, there are not lacking those who say that you are actually engaged to her. If this be true, I cannot excuse my conduct in the least. ("It is not true," said Glenham, shading his face with his hand.) But up to last evening I thought it a matter in which—in which we—well, I thought it was a free-for-all race, owners up, and it might be a fair field and no favor." He finished abruptly and in evident great embarrassment. Then he rose and commenced pacing the floor.

"Hang it, Glenham! if I am clumsy in my language it's because—because the thing has struck nearer home than you imagine. I admired her from the very first, but I did not know what it meant until—until she nearly slipped from her horse yesterday and fainted.

(Glenham winced as though stung, but still sat in silence.) I did not know what it meant to me, I did not know what it meant to you until she lay there so white and still, and you rode up with a face as white as her own. Last night my eyes were further opened. I won't tell you how; it isn't necessary. Only this, Glenham: if you think my conduct has been unfair or unfriendly, you can afford to forget it and forgive it now, when I tell you that I have no earthly hope in the matter, and that even if it were possible for me to win a thought from her beyond—beyond frank, friendly liking or gratitude possibly for the simple piece of luck yesterday, I would be a whelp to try and do it. Why, Glenham, I haven't a cent in the world; I'm swamped in debt. What, in God's name, *have* I to offer her? Last night I left her house perfectly satisfied of two things,—that she was the dearest thing on earth to me, and that I wasn't worth two straws to her or anybody else, probably. I haven't had a happy night of it, man. I saw clear enough what was before me, and I went down and played poker all night nearly to keep from thinking of the thing, as though that would do any good. It has just come to this, Glenham: I've got to get away from here, and I'm going. I can't win—I'm not worth the love of that sweet girl, and I won't stand in the way of a man who is worthy and can. When I watched you at drill this morning it all came over me, how you must have been cut up by my goings on." And now Ray's voice was trembling, and a suspicious moisture was gathering in his eyes. "Arthur, because I'm not worth a woman's love you need not think me unworthy a man's friend-

ship. Forgive me for the trouble I've caused you, old fellow, and let us be friends again."

"Ray, I—I beg *your* pardon!" exclaimed Glenham, springing from his seat, dashing his hand across his eyes and seizing the outstretched gauntlet. "I was a fool, I suppose. Everything seemed going against me. I thought—hang it! I think now that there was no chance for me. It turned me against everybody, I suppose."

"Well, this ends the turn against me, does it not?" said Ray, with a wintry, cheerless smile, but still grasping cordially the hand of his friend. "I'll soon be out of your way, and she'll forget my—my ebullition of yesterday, if indeed she heard it at all."

"Why do you go at all, Ray? What is that for?"

"Because then I'll get away from seeing her every day or hour. Lord, how I wish there were a scout or a shindy! There's going to be a horse-board mighty soon, and Wickham or Bright will help me on to that. It's the only thing I know anything about. So now, I'm off." And he turned to the door despite Glenham's efforts to detain him. There he turned again, and, with a resumption of his old light, reckless manner, exclaimed,—

"'Pon my word, I feel more like a Christian since we've had this short talk than I have in months. Arthur, you have my blessing. Go in and win. That's what I'll do, too,—down at the store. Lucky at cards, unlucky in love, you know. The Prescott crowd rather scooped me last night, and I'll go down and give them a riffle now."

"Then hold on one moment, Ray. I mean to drink

your health, if it is against my rules. It's nothing but sherry, but it's sherry you'll like." And from a locker he produced a brown, portly bottle and some fragile glasses. "These only come out on swell occasions, Ray, but—this is one I'll never forget."

"Never mind that, Glenham. Here's happiness and success to you. Your devotion deserves it."

"Do you know, Ray, that's just what gets me," said the junior, slangily, but with sad earnestness, as he set down his half-emptied glass. "Devotion don't seem to do any good. I almost—I almost believe I've been an abject slave since she—since Miss Pelham came out. It hurts me somehow."

For a moment Ray hesitated. Then he too set down his wine-glass and pondered a few seconds, looking the while at the trouble in Glenham's face. At last he broke forth,—

"I don't know what you'll think of what I say, but 'pon my word, Glenham, I believe you've hit on the truth. There is such a thing as being too devoted, in my opinion. Look here! Did you see Truscott catch that rascal of a Ranger yesterday? You, you remember, went galloping after him wherever he went; you were all eagerness and excitement, just bent on catching the scamp; he saw it, knew it, and it was just fun to him to lead you a race. Then Truscott hauled you off and took the chase instead, and see how he managed it. He just let on to Ranger that he didn't care a cuss whether he was loose or not,—might run to Halifax for all he'd do to stop him; he just rides off to one side, and sure as a gun the horse turns right round and goes running up to inquire what such indifference

means. I tell you, Glenham, lots of women are just like horses; that is, the nice ones are, and I'm paying some of them a high compliment in saying so. Just so long as you go tagging round after one she'll lead you a dance all over creation; it's all fun to her: she's sure of you, you know; but haul off for a while and leave her to herself, and let on that you've tired of that sort of thing and mean to swear off, you'll find that it will bring her round if she cares anything whatever for you. If she doesn't, why, the sooner you know it the better. Now I've been preaching, I suppose, but you try it. Get every scouting detail you can; don't mope around the post. Now forgive my bluntness, Glenham, and—and good luck, old fellow."

With that he was gone.

Some hours later Glenham's servant entered and stood hesitatingly at the doorway. Glenham looked up from his writing. "What is it?" he asked.

"Big scout going out, sir,—two companies; but it ain't our fellows."

Down went pen and desk upon the floor, and, seizing his forage-cap, Glenham rushed forth in search of Ray and Truscott. Failing to find the adjutant at the office he hurried to Ray's camp, where that young gentleman was rubbing head, chest, and arms into a glow after a cold bath.

"Come right in, Glenham. Didn't I say the luck was bound to turn? or did I prudently refrain for fear it wouldn't? This is going to be the boss scout of the season, and now's your chance. I wouldn't miss it for six months' pay, and the Lord only knows what I wouldn't do for that in spot cash."

"Just what I came to see you about, Ray. Do you think you can get the colonel to let me go with you?"

"I'll try it, anyhow. He will like you all the better for wanting to go. I was struck all of a heap for a minute when Truscott came down to warn me; but even poker pales before a chance like this."

"How'd you come out?" asked Glenham.

"Nearly even, after all; and I'd have knocked some of those fellows endwise if there had been a little more time. I was just hauling in the pots when Jack called me out."

Ten minutes afterwards Ray departed on his mission to the colonel's, with what success has already been seen. Then a visit to Captain Canker had been in order, and there too the diplomatic Ray, after a long conversation, had carried his point, for Canker was one of those peculiar company commanders (and there are many who in this respect strongly resemble him) by whom the subalterns attached to his troop are regarded as a species of personal property, and it was not to be supposed that such a concession as was asked for Mr. Glenham could be granted without much demur and without a long dissertation, in which his shortcomings as a subaltern, and his captain's long suffering, patience, and consideration as a commander, formed the subject of the monologue. Ray listened with exemplary docility, and Truscott, who had come in to assist according to the colonel's directions, found that matters were progressing favorably under Ray's management, and went off to see Glenham himself. Meantime stable-call had sounded, and all the officers were flocking thither, when Mrs. Raymond's negro servant came

running across the parade. He handed Glenham a note, which the young officer opened, glanced at the single line which formed its contents, changed color, paused irresolutely, and then turned and walked hurriedly back to Captain Raymond's quarters. At the door he was met by Mrs. Pelham, who eagerly beckoned him in. Ten minutes after he appeared at stables, and with painfully embarrassed manner accosted Truscott, who was at the instant conversing with Canker, while the colonel with several officers were entering the "corral" of Tanner's troop.

"Jack, can I see you a moment?"

"Excuse me, captain," said Truscott; then stepping to one side with Glenham, and noting with surprise the changing color and downcast eye of his friend, "What is it, Arthur? Anything wrong?" he asked, kindly.

"Is the order issued yet for me to go with this scout?"

"Not yet. It will be right after stables. Dana goes too."

"Jack, I can't—go."

For a moment there was dead silence. Then Truscott spoke,—

"You know your own business best, Glenham; but did you not ask Ray to see the colonel and get you detailed?"

"I did; yes. I—I cannot explain it, but I've changed my mind. Something I had not foreseen——" He broke off abruptly, utterly unable to continue, and without another word turned and walked hurriedly into the stable enclosure.

"What's the matter with Glenham?" asked Canker.

"He has felt compelled to change his mind, and says that he cannot go," replied Truscott, loyally striving to smooth matters as much as possible for his friend. "I've no doubt he has very weighty reasons." And with that he went to join the colonel.

Soon after retreat that evening, while yet the lingering hues of crimson and royal purple mantled the jagged rocks that hemmed in the valley from the east, a busy throng had gathered in the open space between the quarters and the stables. Drawn up in single rank were the horses of the two companies,—Tanner's and Ray's,—while the men in their rough and serviceable scouting-dress were nimbly darting about their steeds, tightening "cinches," or more snugly strapping the blankets or canteens that swung on the saddles. A little distance away, huddled together in silence, were the Apache scouts who were to accompany the command, and behind them all, scattered here and there over the sandy level, or clustering about the bell-horse of the half-breed leader, were the hardy, devil-may-care-looking little pack-mules.

Thronging about in their undress uniforms and overcoats (for the December air was chill) were the men of the four troops who were not so lucky as to be of the detail, all envious of their departing comrades, and, soldier-like, nearly all indulging in much good-humored chaff at the expense of the envied ones.

"It's old Skinnin' Jim ye're after this time, Micky. Luk out fur that beautiful crop o' yours." An allusion to the vivid hirsute adornment of Private Michael Mulligan that called forth a roar of applause. "Will ye lave me your boots, Hoolihan? It's the other end

of ye that'll need a bomb-proof." "Don't you get kilt, Kelly; it'll ruin the sutler entirely," etc. All of which seemed to give infinite delight to the surrounding crowd, and not at all to discompose the martial objects of the sallies.

Presently Lieutenants Ray and Dana rode up and commenced a leisurely inspection of their commands, putting an end to the fun and laughter. Darkness was beginning to settle down upon the garrison, and lanterns were called into requisition. Presently again there appeared a large party, at sight of whom the men respectfully drew back right and left, and, escorted by a number of officers, Mrs. Raymond, Mrs. Turner, the inevitable Mrs. Wilkins, and several others unnamed in our chronicle made their appearance upon the scene, all intent upon giving the command a cheery God-speed upon its mission. Then came the colonel with Grace leaning upon his arm, and instantly she was swallowed up in the group of ladies, and for the time being deprived of all opportunity of seeing what was going on. She was aware of the fact that Mr. Ray was standing near her laughingly chatting with some of the ladies, and that Mr. Dana was waiting for a chance to put in a word, but Mrs. Turner really hadn't seen anything of her for an age, and Mrs. Raymond had certainly thought she meant to cut her acquaintance, and Mrs. Wilkins was dying to know why Mrs. Pelham didn't come out to give the boys a send-off, and between the three matrons and the two or three damsels hovering about, all talking at once as was their wont, or treading on the heels of one another's sentences, Grace was in such dire confusion that she would

have turned gladly to Ray or Dana for relief, when dead silence fell upon all as Mrs. Wilkins's voice pounded the query,—

“But where's little Glenham? I thought he was to go along.” And then all feminine eyes were fixed upon Grace.

Ray noted it, quick as a flash, and came to the rescue. “Hadn't you heard, Mrs. Wilkins?” he said, with a tone of weary indifference, indicative of a desire to drop the subject. “The order was not issued at all.” And then, laughingly, “Miss Pelham, am I not to be allowed the customary luxury of last words before going forth to deeds of derring do? I want you to see my troop, anyhow.” And with quiet determination he took her hand, placed it within his arm, and led her out of the inquisitive group.

“Is Mr. Glenham not going?” she gasped, the instant they were beyond ear-shot.

“Mr. Glenham is *not* going,” he answered, in a low, measured tone.

“Why?”

“He merely writes that an utterly unforeseen circumstance has induced him to change his mind. I have not seen him; he did not come to dinner.” And wonderingly he looked into her face. It was evident that she had heard the news for the first time, and was more than perplexed.

“I hope you will keep up your riding, Miss Pelham, while we are away. Tanner tells me that he leaves Ranger here,” said Ray, considerately, desirous of changing the subject.

“Yes; so Mr. Hunter told me. Where is Cap-

tain Tanner? I want to thank him and to say good-by."

"Not here yet, and time's up, too. But I fancy it was hard lines saying good-by to Mrs. Tanner and little Rosalie. Here they come, though, Tanner and Truscott both." And as he spoke two tall, manly forms passed them in the gathering darkness and approached the colonel. "We'll be off in a minute, Miss Gracie," said Ray, and his voice lowered. "Wish me good luck."

She felt that his hand, now clasping hers, was trembling. She knew with all her woman's intuition that with all his forced gayety of manner this parting was no easy one to him. She liked him well, and felt grateful for the tact that he had shown, more than grateful for the skill and gallantry with which he had so recently rescued her from a probable fate; but though her heart beat throbbingly at the moment, it was not for him; and the deep, dark, glorious eyes looked beyond, though only in one furtive glance, and sought the taller of the two forms now standing by her father's side. For an instant she forgot the young soldier standing patiently before her. "Good-by, Miss Gracie," he gently said; then with quick, impulsive movement raised her hand to his lips, turned, and sprang to his horse. The next moment he was in saddle in front of his troop, and she had not even answered him. Irresolute she stood a moment, then she saw her father shake Tanner warmly by the hand, and the latter, putting his arm through Truscott's, drew him to one side. She joined the colonel.

"Papa, I want to speak to Mr. Ray; I haven't bade him good-by. Come with me."

"Why, certainly, daughter," he answered, as he led her rapidly towards the spot where the lieutenant, seated on his horse, was addressing some words to one of his sergeants. "Here, Ray, my boy, Grace wants to say good-by." And Ray was off his horse and on his feet beside her in less than a second.

"You *know* I wish you all success and a speedy and safe return, Mr. Ray," she said, as she held forth her hand. "You will not like it, of course, if I say that I almost hope you won't see an Indian the whole time you are away."

"That would be the worst kind of luck, Miss Gracie. Ah, Jack, is that you? What! good-by already? I thought you would see us off."

"So I had intended," said the deep voice she had learned to know so well, as Truscott suddenly appeared at her side. "Good-evening, Miss Grace. I had promised myself the pleasure of escorting you out to see the start, but found that you had already gone. Ray, I have to attend to something for Tanner. Good-by and good luck, old fellow." And with a warm clasp of the hand for him, and uplifted cap and courteous bow for her, he hurried away. Then came the ringing trumpet-call, and Tanner's soldierly voice ordering "mount." The colonel drew his daughter swiftly back, the men swung into saddle, reformed ranks, and the next instant were marching off in column of fours down the slope to the south. There was no cheering, no noise, or confusion. In silent array they disappeared in the darkness, and the throng of spectators broke up and wandered homewards. For a few moments Grace was detained by her father, who was talking with Major

Bucketts, and several of the ladies compelled their escorts to wait until she should be ready to start. Then, as they walked across the parade in a group, there were many invitations to come and sit a while on this and that piazza, but Grace desired to see what had become of her mother, and so declined. Mr. Hunter was walking beside her, and escorted her to the door. "Do come out again, Miss Pelham, and walk out on the bluff with me. We can hear them as they ford the stream," he urged. She ran up-stairs, knocked at her mother's door. A peevish voice bade her enter, and she found her ladyship stretched upon the bed with her night-lamp on the table. "You are not well, mother?" she asked, gently.

"I am worried half to death, and have a splitting headache," was the reply.

"Can I do nothing for you? Can I not help you at all?"

"You *could* help me vastly by coming to your senses. Otherwise not," was the ungracious reply, and her ladyship tossed impatiently over on her side.

Grace hesitated one moment; then saying, quietly, "I will soon return to you, mother," left the room.

Mr. Hunter was waiting for her. Together they strolled out in the starlight towards the edge of the bluff in rear of the officers' quarters. As they neared the slope Grace became aware of two figures dimly visible standing just before them; one tall, stalwart, soldierly, the other a slender, graceful, womanly form. She knew both at a glance, and stopped short. As she did so, loud, ringing, and clear, the trumpet signal—first call for tattoo—rose on the air. Her companion

looked down in surprise at her abrupt stop, but she never heeded him. Her eyes were fastened upon the pair in front. Even as she gazed, even as the first notes of the call swelled upon the breeze, she saw the woman droop and sway; saw him bending towards her; saw him fold her in his arms, and could bear no more. "Oh, come away! come away!" she hoarsely whispered to Hunter, and plucking nervously at his coat-sleeve, turned and fled.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Mr. Truscott appeared at breakfast on the following morning he was surprised at the extremely cold manner in which Mr. Hunter returned his salutation. Glenham he had not seen at all; the boy had risen early and gone off upon a lonely ride. But Truscott had too many things to think of to worry over a fact that at another time would have attracted his attention. Glenham had actually avoided him all the previous evening as well. Bucketts, Carroll, Crane, and the doctor greeted him as usual, and went on with their speculations as to the probable result of the scout just started, and Truscott, busied in his own reflections, thought no more of Hunter's averted eye. "The youngster possibly thinks he ought to have been sent out instead of Dana, and that I'm to blame," was the explanation that occurred to him. "He will think better of it after a while."

Office-work over, he rose from his desk and went with his usual straightforwardness to the colonel's and rang at the bell. "Can I see Miss Pelham?" he asked of the servant.

"Miss Pelham is not able to leave her room, say to Mr. Truscott," said the voice of her ladyship, at the head of the stairs.

The adjutant stepped quickly into the hall and gazed

aloft. "Miss Pelham is not seriously ill, I trust," said he, with evident anxiety in face and voice.

"She is far from well, and cannot see anybody," was the reply, in a very stately and unsympathetic tone.

"I am extremely sorry to hear it, Mrs. Pelham. Please express to her my sincere sympathy and regret," said he, and, hearing no response, reluctantly withdrew. Leaving the house, looking anything but comforted, Mr. Truscott turned in at an adjoining piazza, and knocked at Captain Tanner's door. While waiting for admission, something prompted him to look at the side window of the colonel's quarters. As he did so, Mrs. Pelham suddenly withdrew her peeping head, but he had distinctly seen her. Inquiry of the answering Abigail resulted in the information that Mrs. Tanner, too, was indisposed, and had not left her room. "But would Mr. Truscott stop in by and by?" Mr. Truscott said he would, and mean time proceeded to his own quarters.

Passing Captain Turner's, he raised his cap in acknowledgment of the smiling greeting of the lady of the house. She was eagerly conversing with young Mr. Hunter, who looked away. At home he found the house deserted. Glenham had returned evidently, and was now probably engaged in some of his company duties. Truscott unlocked his wardrobe and took therefrom the pretty whip Grace had tossed him two days before, seated himself in his easy-chair, and holding it in his hands, gave himself up to thought. Two or three of the greyhounds, finding the entrance open, stole to his doorway and looked wistfully in, begging for an invitation to come, but he did not see them. An

ambulance rattled past the house, and he heard laughter and familiar voices, but paid no attention. For nearly an hour he sat there thinking earnestly, or perhaps at times only idly dreaming. At last he rose, replaced the dainty whip in the wardrobe, seated himself at the desk, and wrote a brief note, closed, sealed, and addressed it to "Miss Pelham, Camp Sandy," and as the noonday call was sounding from the guard-house, sent the note by the hands of the office orderly. It had been a dreary morning to him, but it had been worse for Glenham.

To begin with, the latter felt utterly certain that the whole garrison was talking about him. He knew well that Ray had told several officers that he, Glenham, had applied to be ordered out on the scout. It was known all over the post before stable-call, for, had not Mrs. Pelham heard it while at the Raymonds? and had not his own servant come in to know what things the lieutenant would take in his pack, and couldn't he, too, go along? And then at the eleventh hour he had most inexplicably backed out. Full well he knew the flood of conjecture, gossip, and talk to which his sudden change of mind would give rise. Full well he realized that among the officers he would be regarded with grave disappointment, among the men as a milksop, and among the ladies of the garrison as legitimate prey for all their questionings and insinuations. The fact that Mrs. Raymond was the only one who, up to late in the previous evening, had any idea of the real cause of his conduct was not fraught with especial comfort; for the absolute inability of that fascinating but volatile young matron to keep anything to herself was only too well

appreciated throughout the —th. Within twenty-four hours, therefore, he counted on the story being told with a score of exasperating embellishments all over the post, and was furthermore certain that the next day's mail for Prescott would go up laden with a dozen letters from as many feminine pens; the story of his "break-down"—so he regarded it—being the one topic. He hated himself, hated, or began to hate, the woman whose influence had brought the thing about. He felt ashamed to look his colonel in the face, and he alone of all the officers of the post failed to put in an appearance when Tanner's command marched away. Nevertheless, he was utterly, miserably in love, poor boy; and, like many another poor boy under similar circumstances, he rated ambition, professional pride, the "*qu'en dira-t-on?*" of Mrs. Grundy, everything—*anything* as naught in comparison with what had been set before him as the inevitable consequence of his going away at this critical juncture,—the loss of the lady of his love.

And this was the terrific whip held over him by that prospective mother-in-law.

Mrs. Pelham heard the news of Glenham's application as she sat with Mrs. Raymond during her afternoon visit; the captain himself had come in with the information. Startled as she was, madame had kept her wits about her, and even while conversing with her host and hostess had managed to review the situation and to decide on her plan of action. Well she knew that, despite all her efforts to connect Mr. Truscott's name in a dishonorable affair with Mrs. Tanner, she had not been able to more than temporarily

shake the confidence in and respect for him which she saw to be daily growing in Grace's heart. She had marked all too plainly the girl's glad welcome of her soldierly friend, and the glow of happiness in her face on her return from her ride. Then there was this miserable affair of Ralph's. If the truth concerning that were to leak out at all, her hopes, her plans, were dashed to earth, for now she felt assured that Truscott, not Glenham, had been her son's benefactor. Oh, what an idiotic blunder she had made in her wrath! Why had she ever mentioned that matter, or shown Ralph's letter to the colonel? He would only probe it to the bottom, find out that he was even more indebted to Truscott than he supposed; then Grace would be told the story, and that would be the end of everything. Poor perturbed lady! She could stand the contemplation of such disaster no longer. Not only her plans would fail, but she herself must infallibly be exposed to the contempt of her husband and, perhaps, that of her own daughter, for whom she had been plotting, manœuvring, and lying all this time.

Prompt measures alone would avail her. She must see Glenham, and see him at once. Not at home, for there she knew the colonel, Grace, and probably others to be at that moment. Mrs. Raymond would befriend her she felt sure. What wouldn't that politic lady do to curry favor with so ruthless an old agitator?

"I want to see Mr. Glenham at once. May I send for him to come here?" she hurriedly asked.

"Why, of course. Sam will run and tell him. There goes stable-call now," said Mrs. Raymond.

Her ladyship seized a scrap of paper. "Come to

me instantly at Captain Raymond's," she wrote, and away went Sam with the brief, mandatory missive. What need of explanation? thought she; had he not promised to obey her implicitly? Quickly as he came, he could hardly come quickly enough. She met him at the door, and ushered him into the vacant parlor. Mrs. Raymond had withdrawn, of course, but, oh, how she hoped that madame's voice would reach the adjoining room in tones so loud that she could not help hearing!

But Mrs. Pelham did not speak loud. In low, hurried, impressive tones she told Arthur Glenham in plain words that his one chance of winning Grace lay in his remaining at the garrison. "It is madness to think of going now, at the very moment when her heart is beginning to feel its dependence upon you," she said. He glanced up quickly, a wild hope in his young eyes. "*I know it*," she continued. "She has almost confessed as much to me. But if you go, you subject her at once to the attentions of a man who is no true friend of yours, and whom she is too innocent to fathom."

"What—who do you mean?" he gasped.

"Your *friend*, Mr. Truscott."

He started as though struck. "I can believe no wrong of Truscott," he said. "He is my most trusted friend, but I never mentioned this—this to him until last night."

"Mark my words, though. You go at your own risk. *Even the colonel is reluctant to have you go now* I shall say not another word to warn you. It is only because of my promise to you that I have brought my-

self to do this. If you love Grace and would win her, stay ! If not, go !”

And of course he stayed.

Despite Mrs. Pelham's "worry and headache," a number of officers and ladies gathered in the colonel's parlor soon after tattoo the night that Tanner's command marched away. Fleeing from the spot where she and her escort had plainly seen Mr. Truscott and Mrs. Tanner, Grace had called all her pride and pluck into requisition, and finding her father with one or two of his cronies standing on the piazza, she had begged them to come into the parlor.

"Yes, *do* come," urged the colonel, and "Grace will give us some music." And so it had happened that quite a number of the young people had gathered there, and for over an hour mirth, music, and laughter had reigned supreme. Never had Grace seemed so winsome, so full of life and gayety. She sang for them again and again, and sang gloriously ; her voice rich, clear, and true, seemed more thrilling than ever, and they would not let her stop. Twice the colonel bent to kiss her and praise her singing. And she, looking up in his face, answered so that only he could hear, "If it please you, father ; I care for no one else." In the midst of it all who should enter but Truscott. She was singing at the moment, but the colonel welcomed him cordially, and Mrs. Turner motioned him to a seat by her side. The instant the song was finished he rose and went forward ; but before he could speak Miss Pelham, too, had risen, and with perfect ease and the most radiant smile, exclaimed, "This is indeed an honor, Mr. Truscott. You have been so confirmed a recluse that an evening

visit from you is more than a rarity." Then she turned instantly to reply to several requests for another song, laughingly protesting that they must leave at least one or two for some other occasion; and Truscott noted with vague uneasiness and disappointment that the little hand so carelessly extended had barely touched his, and was cold as ice.

During the rest of the brief half-hour he listened with delight to her singing when she sang, and watched the grace and cordiality of her manner among the guests with growing admiration, but not one word more was vouchsafed him. It was soon time to go, for others were going, and not even a good-night pressure of the hand could he gain. Mrs. Turner had absolutely taken his arm after saying farewell, and Grace, quickly noting the circumstance, had seized her opportunity.

"Ah! you going, too, Mr. Truscott? Good-night." And with the words she turned her attention to other departing guests. But when all were gone, and her father would have detained her a few moments, she hurriedly kissed his ruddy forehead and wished him pleasant dreams, darted up the stairs and into her own room, locked the door, threw herself upon the bed, and burst into a passion of tears.

Late the following afternoon, and not until late, she appeared in the parlor. A violent headache had been her excuse for remaining in her room all day, but she was wide awake when Truscott called, and as her mother stepped to the head of the stairs, she had listened to that brief conversation with strained attention. She could not help noting the earnest anxiety in his voice, and a thrill of gladness for an instant possessed

her. Then she recalled the scene of the previous night, and then again her mother's voice was heard in the adjoining room, "And now he is going into Mrs. Tanner's." And Grace hardened her heart against him in bitter, jealous pain. Gladly would she have shunned all eyes that day, but the Raymonds and Mr. Glenham had been invited by Mrs. Pelham to dinner, so rise and dress she had to. Once during the morning the colonel had come in to kiss and cheer her, but she shrank from all conversation with her mother, and lay perfectly still, as though striving to sleep, whenever that lady entered; but at noon she heard the servant coming up the stairs after answering the door-bell, and with a "sh-sh-sh" of caution, Mrs. Pelham had swooped out from her own room and taken possession of the tiny note that Grace could not see. No wonder that Truscott received no answer that day,—that the tiny note never was answered. At stables he learned from the colonel that she was better, and "had been resting quietly," but that was all. It had been his intention to have a talk with Glenham after dinner, and on returning from stables he found the latter getting into his full uniform. They had not met before during the day.

"What's that for, Glenham?" he asked. "There is no parade to-night."

"Dinner at the colonel's," was the brief reply.

"Indeed! I hope Miss Pelham is well enough to be down, then."

"She was looking well as ever when I saw her ten minutes ago," was the dry response; and Truscott, pained and stung,—he hardly knew why,—decided that he would postpone what he had to say to Glenham.

He spent the evening alone, and it was after eleven, and he had gone to bed, when he heard Glenham return. It used to be the practice of the latter when he came in late and found no one in their sitting-room to go to Jack's door and see if he had turned in; but this night he never stopped an instant; and Truscott, lying sleepless for hours afterwards, and thinking over the events of the past few days, felt sadly assured that in many ways the course of his true love was to run no smoother than was proverbially the case.

The next was a busy day in the office. Truscott stopped at the colonel's on the way thither to inquire after Miss Pelham, and was told by the servant that she was much better, and at the moment at breakfast. The colonel himself remained but a few moments at headquarters, and yet Truscott's practised eye saw at once that something had gone very wrong with him. He was looking anxious and harassed, and replied to the few questions addressed him by the adjutant with evident constraint. All the morning and much of the afternoon Truscott was chained to the desk, engaged with the sergeant-major and the clerks on some important papers; but shortly before stables he called at the colonel's, and inquired if he could see Miss Pelham. He heard the rustle of feminine garments in the parlor as the servant ushered him through the hall, but it was vacant when he entered, and the door leading to the dining-room was closed; the piano was open, and on the rack was a favorite song of Miss Pelham's,—Millard's "Waiting." On the piano was a cavalry forage-cap,—Glenham's. In a moment the servant returned. "Miss Pelham is lying down, and begs to be

excused," was the message ; and with a deep, dull pain, and a sense of injury he could not define rankling in his heart, Jack Truscott turned and left the parlor. He never entered it again.

Late that evening two soldiers of Captain Tanner's troop rode into garrison, went at once to the adjutant's quarters, and delivered a package addressed in the captain's handwriting to Truscott. Opening it he found a letter for himself, a second addressed to Tanner's business agent in San Francisco, a third to Mrs. Tanner. Sending the men to their quarters he rapidly read the first note, and for a few moments remained buried in thought. Then he started, looked at his watch, once more glanced at his note, and, taking all three in his hand, left the house.

Meantime, what has become of Mrs. Tanner ? Just how she bore the tidings that her husband was to be torn from her at the very day and hour when she most needed his loving caresses, just what that parting cost her, just how long, dreary, and tear-laden was the night that followed the departure of his command, and how desolate and sad the succeeding day, no words could tell ; and, fortunately enough, the poor powers of this narrator would fall too far short of adequate description to render the faintest attempt pardonable. There are some sorrows too sacred for prying eyes to look upon ; too deep, too holy, for any record save that of the All-Merciful on high. *Is it compensation ? is it, can it be sufficient to the eye of faith upturned in dumb, yet patient, prayerful agony, that He who giveth only to take away, notes with loving pity every sob and tear, and only chasteneth because He loveth ?* Ah ! I

fear me there be mothers who cannot fathom the depths of a love so infinite, mothers to whom the prattle and petting of some sweet, sunny-haired baby were worth far more than a love infinite indeed, yet infinitely beyond them. Bow and bend and bear it as they may, is there a mother-heart so utterly sanctified by grief, I wonder, as to be able to *feel* the utter resignation of the words the quivering, kiss-robbed lips so meekly strive to frame,—“Thy will be done”? Perhaps so. Possibly it was so with her whose lot it was to be bereft of the idols of her gentle life; to be left lone, desolate, wellnigh deserted in her bereavement; to be shunned by those whose hands were not worthy to unlatch the very shoes upon her feet, whose lips were too sullied to breathe the least holy, womanly, wifely thought that ever found birth in her pure and humble soul. Let us leave her with her grief and her God. It was practically what Camp Sandy did.

The Raymonds and Mr. Glenham had dined at Colonel Pelham's, as has been seen, and it will be remembered that Mr. Hunter was in earnest conversation with Mrs. Turner that morning. Very soon after Hunter's departure Mrs. Turner had run over to Mrs. Raymond's. Later in the day Mrs. Wilkins in a high state of excitement was observed to be imparting some intelligence to no less than three ladies over on Captain Canker's piazza. That night after dinner Mrs. Raymond had a long whispered conversation with Lady Pelham on the sofa, while Grace was trying to sing for the benefit of the adoring Glenham, who hung rapturously about the piano. Later still Mrs. Pelham had inflicted a curtain-lecture upon the colonel which robbed

him of sleep, and in course of which she gave him a piece of information that made him utterly wretched. The next morning on his return from the office he had sought Grace, and after a few moments' conversation, in which he had shown grievous embarrassment, he had taken her in his arms, saying, "Grace, my darling, sometimes I think I can believe nobody but you. For God's sake, tell me that this story I have heard of what you and Mr. Hunter saw is not true!" And she, looking wildly up in his face one moment, exclaimed, in horror-stricken tones, "Oh, father, he cannot have told it!" and burst into a passion of hysterical tears.

Then poor Pelham knew it was true. He did not go to stables that afternoon: he did not want to see Truscott. He shut himself in his "den," as a sort of study and smoking-room of his was called, and strove to think. When the adjutant reported the command present at tattoo, he merely replied, "Very well, sir," and abruptly re-entered the house. And when ten o'clock came and the trumpet-call for extinguishing lights wailed through the garrison, its notes sounded like a knell to his honest heart. Ah, how many there were to whom the notes were even sadder! All because a weak-minded boy had not sense enough to hold his tongue.

"You don't seem to like Mr. Truscott," Mrs. Turner had remarked to Mr. Hunter that morning. "Why, I thought he was the Admirable Crichton himself."

Now Mr. Hunter was Mrs. Turner's latest victim. The young fellow was dancing around the limited circle of which her apron-string was the radius much of his time, and he was jealous of her admiration for

Truscott, and was not a youth of profound good taste or discretion in any event.

"I don't like any man who is two-faced," was his surly reply.

"But I always thought Mr. Truscott the personification of honor and straightforwardness," she persisted.

"He may be, only his way doesn't strike me as eminently high-toned," was the answer. And in ten minutes she had deftly extracted his story from his not unwilling lips and sent him about his business. This was the delicious plum she carried to Mrs. Raymond, and it needs no dilation now to tell how the plum expanded by the time it reached the colonel.

No wonder no lady had called to see how poor little Mrs. Tanner was on either of the two days succeeding her husband's departure.

All that evening the colonel sat alone in his den. It was late, eleven o'clock, when the wife of his bosom suggested his going to bed. She herself had been having a long chat with Mr. Glenham, despite the fact that she had monopolized him during much of the afternoon. Grace was indeed up-stairs when Truscott called, but it was Mrs. Pelham, not she, who sent the message that she was lying down. But the colonel would not go to bed.

"I cannot sleep now, Dolly. I want to think. The mail goes up to Prescott first thing to-morrow morning, and I must write two letters."

It must have been long after midnight when at last he rose, and, with a drawn, wearied look upon his face, extinguished the lights and went to his room. Even then he stood for some little time at his window, look-

ing out upon the starry sky to the southward. Suddenly he heard quick footsteps crossing the parade from the direction of the office. Somebody bounded up on the piazza, and instantly the clang of the bell, thrice repeated, resounded through the house. Pelham quickly waddled down and opened the door.

"Who is it?" he sharply asked.

"Corcoran, sir. It's an important despatch, and I brought it right over. It's lucky I sleep next to the instrument, or we might not have got it until morning, sir."

"Come in," said Pelham. And leading the way to the parlor, he struck a light, tore open the envelope, and hastily read the contents.

"Go and wake the adjutant at once, and tell him I want him," he said. And Corcoran was off without a word.

The next moment Grace's light footstep was heard upon the stair, and in a loose, warm wrapper, she stole hastily in upon him.

"What is it, papa? I could not call for fear of waking mother, and I was anxious."

"A very important message from the general with instructions for Tanner's command. Instructions he must get at once, too," said the colonel, "and there isn't a scout in the garrison."

"What can you do?" she asked, anxiously.

"I don't know yet; I've sent for the adjutant," he stammered. He could not explain it, but he could not then pronounce his name in her presence. Again he read the despatch.

"Advices just received from Stryker prove Eski-

minzin to be near Diamond Butte. Send couriers after Tanner at once and turn him that way. Indians are strongly reinforced and making for Green Valley. Hold entire command in readiness to move at moment's notice. What force has Tanner? Acknowledge receipt."

He handed it to her. "You may read it, Grace. I had thought all this was at an end, but you never can tell. There be agents and agents. It looks like another general outbreak."

The sweet face paled a little as the curt, business-like wording of the despatch met her eyes. Then she looked up.

"Do not speak of it to any one," he said. "Your mother sometimes forgets that these are not matters for talk. But what keeps Corcoran?" he asked, impatiently, and stepped forth upon the piazza. Despite the chill night air, Grace threw his heavy cloak around her and followed him, linking her arm through his and nestling close to his side.

"It is all so exciting, and yet, I can't help it, I like it," she said.

"You're quite a soldier, Gracie," he answered, fondly. "I believe you were cut out for the army, despite your mother's predilections for civil life. Here comes Corcoran on the run, as usual. Did you find him?" he asked.

"No, sir. He isn't there at all."

"What?" said Pelham, with sudden vehemence. "Not there? Are you sure?"

"Sure, sir. Mr. Glenham got up and we went through the house. He isn't there, and all is dark

down at the store——” And Corcoran paused irresolutely.

“Go and call the officer of the day, Captain Canker, quick,” said the colonel, shortly.

Then there was silence. He put his arm around his daughter’s waist, and she, shivering, though not from cold, nestled closer to him. From the guard-house arose the prolonged cry of the sentry, “Number one, one o’clock.” And one after another the sentries took up the call before Corcoran returned. Behind him, with clanking sabre, came Captain Canker.

“Have you any idea where Truscott can be?” was the immediate question from the colonel’s lips.

Before the astonished officer could reply, the door of Captain Tanner’s quarters, close beside them, opened. A broad light shone forth upon the parade, and, calm and erect, the adjutant stepped quickly from the hall. The door closed behind him. With one bound Grace Pelham tore herself from her father’s arm and fled upstairs.

“You are calling me, colonel. What is it?” the deep, grave voice was heard to ask, and Mr. Truscott stood before his commanding officer.

For an instant no one spoke. Pelham fairly staggered. Canker’s face bore an expression of virtuous amaze and indignation. Truscott alone looked self-possessed.

“Mr. Truscott,” at last said the colonel, with evident effort, and very gravely, “I have been sending everywhere for you.” (A conventional statement which many a post commander considers it justifiable to make when the desired officer doesn’t happen to be in the

first place he is looked for.) "It is necessary to send a courier to Tanner at once, some one who will be sure to find him. A most important despatch is received, and it must get to him quick as possible. Who can take it?"

"I can, sir."

"But I don't want to send you. Stop, though," said the colonel, and a sudden thought seemed to flash across his mind. The look of deep trouble, of stern, startled resolution, was still upon his face. "I wish you *would* go. It is best you should. I—I mean it is of such moment that I like to intrust it to no one but an officer."

"I can start inside an hour, colonel, and can catch him before the next sunset."

"Then take any escort you like, and get ready at once. Bucketts will act for you in your absence. I will be at the office." And Truscott turned and left, turned suddenly again at Tanner's quarters, and knocked lightly at the door. It was opened at once, and he entered. The colonel and Captain Canker gazed after him in silence. Then their eyes met. "Come into the parlor, Canker," said the colonel, hoarsely, and led the way. "Corcoran, go and wake the sergeant-major, and send the orderly trumpeter to report to the adjutant. Wake Major Bucketts and say—no, never mind waking anybody else. Come in, captain." And the colonel closed his door.

In five minutes Mr. Truscott reappeared on the piazza, and Mrs. Tanner followed him. "You will stop for the letter?" she anxiously asked.

"Certainly," he answered, and was gone.

At two o'clock in the morning three horsemen rode rapidly away from the adjutant's office down the slope to the southward. With them were two led horses. Jack Truscott had started on his dangerous mission.

CHAPTER XVII.

DOWN in a deep valley close under the frowning cliffs of the Mogollon range a cavalry detachment has gone into bivouac. The setting sun flashes upon tree-top and rocky spur above, and throws into bold prominence the long expanse of rugged precipice that spans the view far as eye can reach. To right and left it stretches, a barrier grim and impassable, shutting off all view towards the east. Northward and southward are the foot-hills, lofty in themselves, but dwarfed by the great height of the palisaded crest in front. All are densely wooded, covered with short, stunted but hardy pine, juniper, and scrub-oak, while down in the deep interlying valleys and narrow cañons tall cotton-woods rear their heads. It is in a grove of these that the men have unsaddled, and now, as twilight settles upon the scene, and the herd-guards are doubled around the grazing steeds and pack-mules, the glow of the camp-fire is visible down under the stream-bank, whence its light cannot be detected beyond the narrow limits of the bivouac. The ruddy glare falls upon the faces of three or four busy soldiers, the cooks *pro tempore* of the command, but almost to a man the other troopers are gathered about two dusty, weary-looking non-commissioned officers who have just dismounted and are now unsaddling their jaded horses. The merry, reckless

chaff is stilled ; a marked silence has fallen upon all ; the men converse in quiet tones. Even the horses have an air of mysterious caution about them, and the Indian allies, crouching or squatting under the trees, are gazing fixedly, but without a word to one another, upon the group of soldiery. Even while questioning the new-comers and listening eagerly to their replies, some of the troopers keep constantly in view a party of five men standing aloof engaged in earnest conversation. One of them, the tallest, is unbuckling belt and spur as he stands leaning against a broad cottonwood. He lifts his broad-brimmed scouting-hat and passes his hand across his white forehead with an air of evident fatigue, but continues his quiet talk to the others. It is Jack Truscott, and around him are Tanner, Ray, Dana, and the doctor. Since two o'clock in the morning he has been in pursuit, through mountain-pass, through dark and gloomy cañon, through wilds only well known to the infesting Apaches, through lairs where every moment he might expect to hear their vengeful yell and the crack of rifle or whiz of arrow ; but even as he promised and predicted, before the setting of another sun he has accomplished his mission, and the despatches are now in Tanner's hands. He has read them, and, pondering over their contents, is still eagerly listening to Truscott's talk.

"Could you tell how many there were?" he asked.

"No," said Truscott. "But it was evident that they had been there to fill their *ollas*, and it must be that their main body is somewhere among the high peaks, within a mile or two of the water."

"What a blessed piece of luck ! We passed up the

valley on the other side, and might never have seen it. Who knows what time the moon will be up?"

"Eight thirty," answered Ray.

"Then we want supper for all hands first thing. Jack, you must be hungry as a wolf. Ray, Dana, let your men fill their canteens and take along a couple of days' bacon and hard-tack. See that every man has fifty rounds carbine cartridges and enough for his revolver. We start afoot at moonrise. There will be time for some of them to get a nap. Doctor, two of the men will carry what you want." And with that Captain Tanner proceeded to stow his despatches in his scouting note-book, and briefly to note in pencil the events of the day. In ten minutes the entire bivouac, officers and men, were eagerly disposing of a substantial supper with the zest only mountain appetites and the vivid uncertainty as to when or where the next might be obtainable can impart.

Then as pipes were filled and lighted, Tanner, Truscott, and Ray, stretched at ease upon their blankets, fell into further discussion.

"What time did Mills and Lewis get in?" asked Tanner, referring to the two soldiers who had been sent back with despatches the day before.

"It must have been soon after ten," said Truscott. "I found Mrs. Tanner still up and dressed, and she got the papers at once."

"I'm sorry to have put you to so much trouble, Jack. It must have been some hours' work. Why, man alive, you cannot have had a wink of sleep for thirty-six hours or more. I never thought of it."

"Never mind that," said Truscott, laughingly. "It

was good luck. If your note had not come I would have been asleep when this despatch reached Sandy, and the colonel would have sent somebody else. Then too if it had not come I would have followed on your trail, or whoever came would have done so, instead of taking the short cut by Hardscrabble and Jaycox Pass, and so would have missed these signs entirely."

"All the same you need rest. Of course, now that you are here, you'll want to go with us on the night-hunt; but you can sleep till nine or ten and follow. Sergeant Kane can go with the Apache-Mohaves and show the signs. We'll follow the old tactics, of course,—attack at daybreak."

"All right," said Truscott, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe; and rolling over, burying his face in his arms, he was soon sound asleep.

Tanner and Ray smoked in silence a while, busied in their reflections. Dana, a few yards away, was writing what appeared to be a letter. The doctor was busy about his pannier, getting ready lint, bandages, and the ominous-looking supplies of his department. Some distance farther the men were chatting in low tones under the trees, kicking off their cavalry boots and spurs and pulling on Indian moccasins as more suitable for the work before them, and overhauling their arms and ammunition-belts. Out in the glade the herds were restfully grazing, while here and there on the outskirts could be heard the subdued voices of the guards as they rebuked some straggling quadruped, while the muffled tinkle of the bells on the necks of the lead-horses of each company's pack-train, and the occasional snap of burning twig or stamp of hoof, were

the only sounds that a hundred yards away would have betrayed the presence of the command.

"Truscott ought to be fairly used up, Ray," said Tanner, finally. "I've a great mind to steal off and leave him sleeping here with the camp-guard to take charge of him."

"You would not get far away before he would be striding after you," said Ray, with a grin. "But what kept him up all last night? I did not understand."

"Why, that was my doing, confound it!" answered Tanner. "I had promised to send copies of certain important papers to San Francisco, and was ordered off in a hurry, and—well, it escaped my attention, for it was particularly hard to leave my wife just at this time. So when the doctor sent Lewis back sick, I wrote to Jack and asked him to get them off by first mail for me. I supposed that he would have them copied by a clerk; but the mail went this morning, and in order to get them off he and Mrs. Tanner had to sit up till after midnight and make the copies. It isn't the first time he has had to look after my affairs for me. I fancy Jack knows more about my business matters than any agent I ever had; and, glad as I am to see him, I wish he hadn't come away from Sandy just now."

Ray looked up inquiringly.

"You didn't know it, I suppose, Ray, but the night we marched away, almost the very hour, was the night five years ago we lost our little Bertie. It is a wretched anniversary to my poor wife, and always upsets her. She never has any intimates or particularly warm friends among the ladies somehow, and Truscott has

been about the only real comrade we've ever had. She thinks all the world of him, for he nursed Bertie through one severe attack while I was away, and he was the only soul to sympathize with her the night we marched. It hurts me to think how lonely these days must be to her and poor little Rosalie." And the bronzed, bearded face turned away from the firelight.

Ray rose impulsively. "Why in thunder hadn't I thought of this, Tanner? I wish all the more now that—— Why! why didn't Jack tell Pelham? Oh, of course you forbade him, but all the same I would have let him know. Never mind, old man, we'll give these reds a trouncing to-morrow and then hurry back for Christmas, and give Rosalie an out-and-out merry one."

"God grant it!" said Tanner, gravely. And Ray wondering at the earnestness, the solemnity of his tone, fell to thinking of their conversation. It had made a deep impression upon his light, careless nature, and he long remembered every word. Well was it that he did so!

At last, looking eagerly aloft among the tree-tops, Tanner notes the faint, shimmering, silvery touch of moonlight. All at the base of the Mogollon is still deep shadow. He rises from the blankets in which he has rolled himself and looks around. At his feet, sleeping like children, are Truscott and Ray. Under a neighboring cottonwood lies Dana, but not asleep. It is too new an experience to him, and the proximity of the doctor's kit of murderous-looking implements is not conducive to placid reflections. All along under the trees, close to the rushing brook, the men are noise-

lessly grouped, most of them soundly sleeping, though a few move restlessly about. To the left front, securely hobbled and under vigilant guard, the eighty-score animals—horses and mules—are scattered over the glade. Here and there is the faint glow of smouldering cook- or watch-fire, and over all peace and silence.

Little by little the silver shield rises higher and peers down over the rocky wall into the depths of the valley. Then Tanner signals to his watchful sergeant, and in low, brief tones the word is given,—

“Tumble up, men.”

No stirring trumpet, no martial reveille, no formal roll-call or assembly, nothing, in fine, that speaks of the pomp and circumstance of war. Rolling out of their blankets and hastily strapping them into bundles, the troopers, with the ease of long practice, stow their small belongings in shape for immediate transportation on mule-back, turn them over to the packers for safe-keeping, and in ten minutes the little command is ready. A strong guard under experienced non-commissioned officers remains most reluctantly in charge of the herds and packs; but some eighty men, nearly all veteran Indian-fighters, are grouped about the watch-fire waiting orders. Looking among them, no wonder Mr. Ray mutters to Captain Tanner, “Well, we’re banditti all over again to-night,” for hardly a vestige of regulation uniform appears in the entire array. Old slouch white hats, shirts of buckskin, canvas, or woollen, trousers of similar material, an occasional pair of boots, but a predominance of serviceable Tonto moccasins, in which the men glide about noiselessly as spirits; not a

uniform coat or cap in the whole command. Even the officers, in their blue flannel shirts and broad-brimmed hats, are as picturesquely unencumbered by any paraphernalia of rank as their men.

"Send Sergeant Winser here with the scouts," is the low-toned order that falls from the captain's lips, as he and Mr. Truscott stand, watch in hand, under the tall cottonwood at the edge of the glade; and, obedient to the summons, a tall, splendidly-built soldier with bronzed face, clear-cut features, and dark, thoughtful eyes, steps forward, and, quietly saluting, stands in silence before his commander. Following him come a dozen Apache scouts, their coarse, matted hair, bead-like, glittering eyes, and snaky movements giving them, despite their temporary and enforced allegiance, an indefinable something that makes the beholder wary and distrustful. These fellows, though, have been proved in many a trying scout and skirmish through the mountains, and their strange Apache names have long since been dropped for the shorter, less romantic, but far more pronounceable titles given by their soldier comrades. Toyáh has become Pop-corn, Kithaymi, Hopkin (after a discharged soldier to whom he had become strongly attached); Tomawárecha is "Whiskey," though he knows not the taste of the article, and a villainous-looking young scamp of a savage, with the appalling name of Ulnyákahorah, is dubbed Jocko for short. And here, too, is Araháwa,—Washington Charley,—and he takes his place by the sergeant's side as interpreter, should interpreting be necessary.

Briefly Tanner gives his instructions.

"Lieutenant Truscott will lead you and the scouts,

sergeant. He found signs six miles down the valley, and we will follow the trail wherever it goes. Ready, Jack?" he asks. Truscott nods, throws his carbine over his shoulder, and without a word strides off down the brook-side. Sergeant Winsor beckons to his Apaches, and away they go at his heels. Then Tanner turns to his troopers. "All ready, sergeant?"

"All ready, sir."

"See to it, men, that your canteens don't rattle. Keep in the shade as much as possible. Come on." And with Ray, Dana, and the doctor close behind him, the captain follows on the trail of the scouts, and after them, in no tactical order whatever, but in perfect silence and readiness, the men of the two troops trudge briskly along. For a while the trail is so narrow and winding that they move in single file, but little by little the valley opens out, broader glades appear, the trees grow sparse, except close along in the bed of the stream, and soon they are able to spread out to the right and left and to see about them. To the right the foot-hills roll off northward in wave-like undulations. To the left, only a short distance from the valley down which they are rapidly marching, high, jagged precipitous cliffs and "buttes" rise against the southern sky, all dark and forbidding.

For over an hour they plunge along, and the pace is beginning to tell upon some of the heavy-weights towards the rear; but Truscott and his Apaches at the front know well that there is no time to be lost in getting on the trail of the Tontos. They must be followed to their lair before daybreak. If it be far from the valley whither they had come for their supply

of water, then every hour will be needed. If near, then there will be plenty of time to rest after they get there. At last, towards eleven o'clock, some time after leaving the banks of the stream, and while pushing ahead among the foot-hills of the tall cliffs to the south, the rearmost men find themselves closing upon the leaders, and now the command is feeling its way.

Among a lot of stunted trees, on a "bench" some few hundred feet above the level of the valley, Tanner has halted his men to take breath. Out in front, gliding from rock to rock, or flitting about among the trees, are the tireless Apaches. The tall forms of Truscott and Winsor can be seen among them, apparently directing their movements. Every now and then a muffled clap of hand or a muttered call brings half a dozen of the wild-looking creatures to the side of some one of their number, who points in silence to broken twig, freshly-turned stone, or the print of moccasin on tuft of grass or ant-heap, then all move on again.

Before them lies a dark ravine. To the left front towers a rugged slope that seems to reach to the skies. Across the ravine to the right there rises another, and right between these, into the gorge itself, the scouts are noiselessly, stealthily creeping. Tanner motions his men to keep back under the trees, and taking Ray with him, crouches forward to where Truscott is kneeling among the rocks.

"In there, do you think?" he whispers.

Truscott shakes his head and points upward.

"They are much higher than this, I take it, and farther in; but the trail seems to lead this way."

Under the rocks the darkness is intense, and only

slow progress is made; but every now and then patches of moonlight are found, and these are eagerly scrutinized. Two of the Indians, Kithaymi and Wawámecha, seem to hunt in couples. Side by side they crawl along, pointing eagerly with their long, bony fingers at objects that are fraught with deep meaning to them, but that would never attract the attention of a white man. At last an opening appears in the rocks to the left of the deep ravine in which they are working. A broad sheet of moonlight streams across the front, and Washington Charley, his eyes gleaming with excitement, his white teeth flashing through his lips, points aloft.

"Got 'em,—plenty Tonto," he whispers to Tanner.

"How far up?"

"No sabe,—mebbe so top," is the answer.

"Go ahead anyhow. Ray, bring up the men."

And now the climb begins in earnest. Noiselessly the scouts swarm up over rock and boulder, peering cautiously ahead all the time, creeping on all-fours to every ridge or projecting point, and warily studying the objects beyond before venturing farther. Close behind the foremost Indians Truscott and the sergeant slowly follow. Back some distance down the jagged slope comes Tanner with the command, noiselessly as white men can. In the darkness some one's foot slips, a stone goes rolling downward, and the metallic clink of a canteen is heard, whereat one or two profane remarks are growled about among the men, and Tanner orders halt in a whisper. "Take off your canteens, men," is the next word, and they are noiselessly deposited under the trees, only the doctor and his attendant

being allowed to retain theirs. Then on they go again. Twice Ray has to turn and caution his men to take it easy. All are eager to get to the front. All know that somewhere, probably at the very top of the rugged mountain they are climbing, a band of Apaches are hidden, for only on the summits of these isolated buttes have they of late dared to build their rancherias, so untiring has been the search for them, so sudden the attack. Presently they come to ledges of rock so steep that only by using both hands and helping one another can they clamber up. Carbines and rifles are passed from man to man, and slowly, warily the ascent is continued, and still, far aloft, the summit stands before them. They have been climbing fully an hour in this way when the word halt is passed, or those in advance hold up a warning hand. Tanner and Ray again creep forward.

“What is it, Jack?”

“Can’t tell. There’s a deep hollow round that point. Charley said wait.”

Tanner looks at his watch. “Nearly one,” he mutters, “and we’re not at the top yet. Did you ever see such a country?”

Well might he ask! Clinging along the side of this huge spur from the main range, his men could look for miles and miles over a sea of tumbled rock and ravine, of jagged precipices and stony heights, of barren wastes or pine-crested slopes. Softened as it was by the silvery touch of the moon, there yet was in the entire scene the very abomination of desolation. Below them yawned a black gorge whose depths no eye could penetrate; before them an almost impracti-

cable ascent of rock and tangled underbrush ; around them nothing that was not savage and inhospitable. Already the keen night air began to cut in to the very marrow, and the men huddled together for warmth. "What stops us?" is the muttered query.

Back come Charley and Toyáh. They are wild with excitement now, and breathlessly the former makes his report. Broken as is his English, his hearers readily understand him. They have found the hostiles, and it is a big rancheria. "Mebbe so two hundred Tonto. No can tell," says Charley. "Come, captain ; come see." And noiselessly as before the three officers creep forward beyond the scouts, following the lead of the agile young chief, who, nearly as naked as on the day he was born, knows neither hunger, thirst, nor cold in the face of such a glorious prospect as lies before him. His savage soul thirsts for war, and here is his opportunity.

Some two hundred yards they half climb, half creep, and at last arrive at a ridge or point, over and around which they are bidden to look, but not to expose head or hand, and to preserve intense silence. Peering, they see a shallow depression in the mountain. It lies between the rocky ridge on which they are crouching and a corresponding ridge some six hundred yards beyond. It is well filled with pines and stunted oaks, is walled in on the east by an almost precipitous cliff, while to the west the mountain-side slopes abruptly down into the depths of that unfathomable gorge. Save the glistening tree-tops and occasional outcropping of boulder, all is darkness. Yet Charley has said that there lay the rancheria ; that in that hollow were prob-

ably over a hundred hostile Apaches. How does he know?

Truscott points beneath them. "Look!" he says.

The mountain breeze is beginning to sigh through the pines and to stir the dead leaves among the crevices of the rocks. As a little gust flutters the branches below them, from a dozen different points, deep down in this mountain fastness, little showers of sparks fly forth, and are as quickly lost to sight. They spring from the smouldering embers of tiny fires, invisible except from above, and this it is that now betrays the position of the hostiles, who, sleeping in fancied security, have not a sentinel to oppose to the coming foe.

For five minutes Tanner and his two comrades study the situation in silence. Some of the fires are away off to the left under the cliff, others to the right nearer the ravine, more directly in front, and around them all they know the Apaches to be huddling. It is a large rancheria, very probably Eskiminzin's, the very one they are after.

Now come the dispositions for attack. It is too dark for effective work down in that hollow, even with the moonlight to aid. Then too a bank of clouds has risen from the west and rolled up towards the zenith. The moon that has been of such assistance on the trail will soon be totally hidden, and in the darkness that must ensue all the advantage will be on the side of the natives. Tanner decides to wait until dawn. Meantime, his men must be cared for. None have overcoats or blankets: to light fires would be too hazardous. Orders are sent back to remain where they are in such shelter as they can find among the rocks, while he, with the

Indian scouts and his officers, explores the ground around the rancheria. An hour's patient, noiseless search results in the discovery that only from their side, the north, and for a short space on the west can the rancheria be approached. The main entrance or "trail" to it is evidently from the south, and they have come to it by the back way. And now the moon has disappeared and all is total darkness. It is impossible to send a detachment farther up the mountain to get around in rear of the position of the Tontos. The darkness prohibits that, and even in daylight, three hours at least would be consumed before they could expect to reach the desired point. Eagerly, tirelessly therefore, they watch their prey. The hours drag along, but there is no relaxation in their vigilance. At last, towards half-past four o'clock, Tanner directs Sergeant Winsor to take his scouts down to the right, to feel their way along the edge of the ravine and get as far forward towards the rancheria as possible. Ray calls up and stations his men a few feet apart all along among the rocks from the ravine to the centre, while Tanner's own company under Lieutenant Dana are disposed along the ridge almost as far as the base of the cliff to the left. Very slowly and cautiously has this been accomplished. Hardly a sound has been made that could be heard more than a few yards away, and now, as a grayish pallor spreads over the heavens above; and the tree-tops rustle in a wind that grows chiller every minute, Tanner's little command, copying the tactics taught by long experience among the Indians themselves, lies crouching in readiness for its spring. Near the centre of the line and in front of all is the captain

himself, kneeling beside a huge boulder; with him, prone upon the ground, lies Truscott; behind them crouch one of Tanner's sergeants and "the Kid." Every man has his orders,—silence, not a move, not a shot until the captain gives the word, then one volley and a rush in. The nearest fire opposite Tanner's position seems about three hundred yards away, perhaps not quite so far. Little by little a wan light is stealing over the scene, and the men can begin to distinguish one another's features; but in the hollow no forms are visible. Tanner looks impatiently at his watch again.

"Quarter-past five," he mutters, "and dark as Erebus down there yet."

Truscott makes no reply. His eyes are fixed on the glow of one particular fire near the middle of the hollow. He puts out his hand and lays it on Tanner's arm, pointing with the other.

Something shadowy and dim is moving down there about that fire. Twice it has passed between them and the blaze. Five minutes more and the blaze leaps upward, as though freshly fed, and the snap and crackle of burning twigs is heard. Distinctly now two human forms can be seen, and along all the watching line there runs a thrill. Some men cautiously bring their carbines to full-cock and ready; others, shivering 'twixt cold and excitement, look eagerly towards their silent captain but stir not.

And now it is growing so light that objects beyond the rancheria are distinctly visible, and along the outskirts of the Indian bivouac before them the men can detect the outlines of rude shelters. Once again Truscott touches Tanner's arm and points to the right front

Between the trees in the hollow and the edge of the deep ravine a level shelf or bench, covered with broken rocks, is now to be seen, and close to the edge of the trees stands the figure of an Indian. For a moment he is motionless, then, gun in hand, he comes lightly stepping along the bench straight to the point of the ridge, straight to where Ray is crouching with his men.

"Quick, sergeant! slip down there and caution them not to fire," whispers Tanner. "Get him alive, if possible."

Then follows a moment of intense strain and excitement. Almost every man in the command can see that Indian coming. Every one knows that a few steps more will bring him right in among Ray's people. Then what will be the result? On he comes, unconscious of danger, nearer, nearer to his foes. Now he is clambering up the rocks, now he is among the stunted trees. Bang!

"Fire!" rings the command. A crashing volley answers, a wild cheer echoes along the hill-side, and from their cover, scouts and troopers, officers and men, come rushing into the hollow, firing as they run. Of just what follows no one man can give accurate account. A few minutes of hot, blasting, raging work, of shrieks, shots, and uproar, of wild dismay among the startled Indians, of screaming squaws and children, of rallying-cries among the warriors, who spring to arms and open rapid but ill-aimed fire. In rush the soldiers among the "wickyups"; carbine and rifle, revolver and arrow, for two desperate minutes are dealing death in every direction. Even in their surprise the Indians fight savagely, like rats in a corner; but though their

numbers are superior, they have no leadership, no organization, no time to think, poor devils! In two minutes they are swept from their camp and are scattered in flight and terror along the mountain-side, abandoning everything.

For ten or fifteen minutes the noise of the pursuit continues, shouts and cries and scattering shots, but there is no such thing as catching these fleet-footed Apaches, and the soldiers, fatigued with their long climb, and stiff with cold, soon give it up and straggle back to the rancheria they have won. The scouts hang longer at the heels of the fleeing Indians, but by seven o'clock the entire command has reassembled amid the ruins of the Apache camp, and the fight is over.

Such being the general features, it is not easy to relate individual experiences. All was so sudden. The young Indian who had prematurely brought on the conflict by walking straight in among the men was the first prisoner, Ray and the men near him having scientifically pounced upon and wellnigh choked him to death before he knew where he was; but in the struggle somebody's carbine was discharged, and as that meant an alarm to the whole Apache band, Tanner at once gave the order to fire, and with the supplementary shout of "Come on, men!" had rushed down the slope towards the rancheria, Truscott close beside him. On the right the scouts and some of Ray's men had worked so far to the front as to be able to pour in a rapid cross-fire, so that the resistance to the main attack was neither vigorous nor sustained; nevertheless, some few Indians had made good use of their arms, one old scoundrel never leaving his "wickyup," but quietly squatting

there, drove arrow after arrow at the leaders of the charging soldiers until a bullet laid him low, and one of these arrows has struck Jack Truscott full in the breast.

Returning from the pursuit somewhat "blown," Mr. Ray encountered his first sergeant and one or two men kneeling by the prostrate form of a comrade.

"Who is it?" he asked, anxiously.

"Kerrigan, sir. Stone dead. Shot through the heart, I think."

"I'm very sorry," said Ray, gravely. "Have we lost many, do you know?"

"They say two of Captain Tanner's fellers are killed, sir, and there's three or four wounded. Loot'n't Truscott's hit, sir," said one of the men.

"Truscott!" exclaimed Ray, springing to his feet. "Where is he?"

"Over there among the wickypus, sir." And, picking his way through smoke and smouldering ember, occasionally stumbling over the stiffening corpse of some half-naked savage, Ray presently came upon Truscott himself, quietly seated at the foot of a tree, looking a trifle pale, perhaps, but placid as ever, while one of the men was cautiously unlacing his hunting-shirt.

"What hit you, Jack?" said Ray, grasping his hand.

"Nothing but a blunt arrow, luckily. There lies the archer," said Truscott, pointing to the body of a hideous old Indian lying under the rude shelter of branches and twigs that had been his temporary home.

"You've bled a good deal, anyhow. Here, Hogan, let me do that." And, kneeling before his friend, Ray with nimble fingers unfastened the heavy shirt and threw it open at the throat. "Why, Jack, you're worse

than a stuck pig, and bleeding yet. Hogan, get me some water, and tell the doctor to come here."

"The doctor's busy, Ray; you can patch it up easy enough. The thing only glanced on a rib, and hasn't done any harm to speak of." But even as he uttered the words Truscott's head drooped wearily and his eyes half closed, a deeper pallor spread over face and brow. Ray threw his arm about his neck and drew the drooping head upon his shoulder. "You must be mighty faint, old man; lie still. We'll have some water in a minute."

With that he threw back Truscott's shirt with his right hand and opened the torn undershirt. All was soaked with blood. Something lying wet and warm upon the broad chest stopped his hand, and Ray drew it forth,—a dainty, filmy, embroidered handkerchief, dripping with the warm current from Truscott's veins, and in one corner, half crimsoned, half spotless white, was embroidered the simple name—"Grace."

There was dead silence an instant. Then Tanner and Mr. Dana came running to them. Ray hurriedly thrust the handkerchief back into Truscott's bosom and held out his bloody hand.

"Don't worry. He is only weak from loss of blood." And Jack, hearing their anxious voices, opened his eyes and looked up with a grin. Then the doctor came, and speedily the flow was stanchd, the necessary bandages applied, and, revived by a nip of brandy from the doctor's flask, the adjutant sat up, while, as Ray expressed it, "Tanner took account of stock."

Fifteen Indians lay dead among the ruins of the rancheria, a few more lay among the rocks in the direc-

tion of their flight.. Three squaws and some children were prisoners, and from them it was learned that the band was indeed that of Eskiminzin, that about one hundred and fifty, mostly warriors, were there encamped, and that Eskiminzin himself had escaped. On the other hand, though a severe punishment had been inflicted on the Indians, and they had lost their fastness and all their supplies and plunder, Tanner was distressed to find that two of his men were killed outright and several quite severely wounded. He had hoped by total surprise to have "jumped upon" the village before the Indians could really get to their arms, but that unlucky single shot had roused the rancheria, and in charging across the open slope into the Indian position he and the men with him had been much exposed. It was not altogether satisfactory, and Tanner's plans were quickly decided. Truscott with a sufficient guard would convey the five wounded by easy marches back to Camp Sandy, while he, with the rest of the command, would push on in pursuit of Eskiminzin. Meantime, an Indian runner would go back with his report of the engagement.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOUR days afterward, at even an earlier hour, just as the first trembling of the willows along the stream announced the stir of the morning breeze, two troopers forded the Sandy below the garrison and rode slowly up the slope to the parade. A light was burning at the guard-house, and others were gleaming in the company kitchens where the cooks were already at work getting coffee and breakfast for the men, for old Catnip was a firm believer in the theory that a soldier was far more apt to take an interest in the grooming of his horse when his own stomach was comfortably filled than when he was suffering for his breakfast. As a consequence, stable-duty was not the bugbear in the —th that it was in other regiments, where the men had to spend an hour or more, shivering and hungry and cross, spattering away with curry-comb and brush, and swearing *sotto voce* at their steeds in the same listless and perfunctory manner with which they would have cleaned several muddy pairs of boots. In Pelham's regiment the principal difficulty seemed to be that of restraining the men from whistling or singing at their work,—a thing which could not be permitted, because it was unprofessional from a military point of view.

Inclining to the right, the leading horseman rode at rapid walk along under officers' row, under the colonel's

quarters, at an upper window of which he gazed lingeringly as he passed ; under in succession all the others until he came to the northernmost building. Here he dismounted, slowly and stiffly, and the other horseman, dismounting also, sprang forward and took the reins.

Stepping to the door, the former turned the knob and pushed, but the door was locked. Going around to a side-window, he knocked upon the pane, and called,—

“Glenham !”

No answer. Thrice he knocked and called, and still there came no reply. Jack Truscott had returned to find himself locked out of his own house.

“Go and ask the corporal of the guard to come here,” he said, wearily, seating himself upon the steps and taking the reins of the patient horses. His comrade walked rapidly away, and Truscott, leaning his head upon his hand, fell to thinking of the strange reception. His heart was sore, and vague distress and perplexity had possessed him. Immediately after the fight Tanner had penned a despatch to Colonel Pelham announcing the result of the affair, detailing his plans, and requesting him to send the hospital steward with assistance to meet the wounded whom Truscott was escorting, two of whom were so badly hit as to be regarded as in a dangerous condition ; yet with the prospect of another battle before him, he could not permit his only medical officer to leave the command. The post-surgeon would undoubtedly come forward to meet the party,—so argued the doctor on duty with him,—and meantime, carried on the springy mule-litters, improvised out of saplings, the wounded would do as well as they could anywhere. For three days Truscott

had plodded along in great pain and weariness himself, and in deeper anxiety on account of one of his men, who seemed sinking rapidly. At last, on the evening of the third day, he had reached Fossil Creek, where, at the latest, aid should have reached him, but aid there was none, and there the soldier died. Taking only an hour's rest, weak and weary though he was, the adjutant decided to push right on to Sandy by a night ride, and secure the assistance so greatly needed by the other men.

Presently the corporal of the guard came hurrying forward.

"Who is officer of the day, corporal?"

"Lieutenant Glenham, sir."

"Lieutenant Glenham! Why! there is no light in his room, and I cannot wake him."

"Beg pardon, sir. *The lieutenant has moved.* He lives in Lieutenant Dana's quarters."

Truscott sat for an instant in stunned silence. When he spoke his voice was stern and strange.

"Go and tell him I am here, and ask for the key of my quarters."

In two minutes the corporal returned with the key.

"Is Mr. Glenham coming?" asked Truscott.

"He didn't say, sir. I told him you was here, and he didn't answer."

"Then go and wake the post-surgeon. Give him my compliments, and ask if I can see him at once. Take the horses to the stable," he added to the orderly, then unlocked his door, entered the dark sitting-room, and, after some fumbling on the mantel, found a match and struck a light.

All was cold, cheerless, desolate. The hearth was piled with dead embers and ashes. Even the dogs had deserted the house. On the centre-table lay a paste-board box tied with ribbon, and the box was addressed to him—in her handwriting.

Quickly he tore it open. Wrapped in tissue-paper lay his silver spurs; but with them, not a line, not a word.

When the surgeon arrived, some ten or fifteen minutes later, the trumpets were just sounding the first call for reveille, and Jack Truscott was sitting motionless in his great easy-chair, his chin upon his hands, his elbows on his knees, his eyes staring vacantly into the empty fireplace. Not until the doctor had called him twice by name, and shaken him by the shoulder, did he rouse himself. One glance in his wan face was sufficient for the keen professional eye. He cut Truscott short in his attempt to detail the events of the past week.

“Never mind that now,—swallow this,” he said, as he poured out some brandy from the decanter. “I’ll send the steward with the ambulance and supplies at once, and gallop down the valley myself after I get you settled. Of course no messenger has got in, or we would have met you forty-eight hours ago. Now, off with these clothes. Hurry up with that fire, Hogan. I want warm water quick as it can be had.”

In vain Truscott protested that he must see the colonel and make his report.

“I’ll do all your reporting for you, and to begin with report you sick from wound; and as I want no brain-fever patient on my hands, you’ll get to bed just as

quick as I can dress that scratch, as you call it." So talked the doctor, as he rapidly and skilfully divested Truscott of his blood-stiffened garments. "Mighty lucky for you that was a blunted arrow, man; you would have been spitted otherwise; that's a jagged tear as it is. What had you on besides these things? Nothing? That's queer! Oh, a handkerchief in there, was there? Of course that checked it a little, but not much."

At last the process of sponging and rebandaging was complete, and Mr. Truscott was snugly stowed away in bed. It had been a desperately hard ordeal, this interview with the doctor; for if ever man wanted to be all alone and to calmly think over his troubles, that man was Jack Truscott. But while he thoroughly intended that his patient should be left alone, it was not part of the doctor's programme that he should be allowed to brood over his perplexities and distress, and "Pills" saw clearly enough that the mental condition of the adjutant was infinitely worse than the bodily. An attendant from the hospital had brought over some medicines, and then been sent in search of Major Bucketts. The latter came with anxiety and promptitude, and the doctor met him at the outer door.

"Come in, Bucketts. I've got Truscott to bed now, and first he must be allowed to make his report to you for the colonel, then I want him to go to sleep and stay asleep, and to remain utterly undisturbed during the day. I'm going at once to Fossil Creek to meet the wounded, and I want you to see to it that Truscott is kept quiet, and *not one word of this business that has been going on must be allowed to reach him.*" Bucketts

nodded grimly, and then, with the doctor, softly entered Jack's room, and the two friends gripped hands.

Truscott told his story uninterrupted, and the quartermaster listened to every detail until it was finished. Then he spoke.

"Now, Jack, I understand it fully, and can give it to the colonel just as you gave it to me. Everything is going smoothly in the office. There isn't a thing to demand your attention, and all you've got to do is to get thoroughly rested. Now I'm off, but every few hours I'll be over to see if you want anything, and there will be a hospital attendant in the next room all day. I tell you the colonel and the chief will be tickled to death to hear what a larruping you gave Eskiminzin."

Then the doctor gave him a sleeping potion, darkened the room, and once more bent over him.

"Jack, it is necessary that you should rest to-day. I'll be back to-night, and will let you up then, but meantime sleep all you can. Now I'm going to see Mrs. Tanner, who is very anxious about the captain, and will rejoice in knowing of his safety. Then I'll be ready to start down the valley."

Then fatigue and suffering were soon forgotten. Hour after hour throughout that chill December day Jack Truscott slept peacefully. Waking towards evening, he found that the attendant had set a little table by his bedside, and that besides the conventional tea and toast from the mess some dainty, tempting dishes were there in readiness for him.

"Who sent these?" he asked.

"Mrs. Tanner, sir, and Mrs. Wilkins. The quartermaster has been here several times, and the colonel

called, and lots of the officers have been here to ask how you were, but my orders was not to let you be disturbed."

And so, feeling hungry, Jack took his tea, and when he next woke it was late in the night, and then he had nothing to do for it but lie awake and think, and he could think of nothing but why those spurs had come back to him in that ungracious way, and why had Glenham abandoned his roof.

It was late on the following day when the doctor reached him, and found him much better. Truscott insisted upon getting up and dressing, and was surprised to find that the doctor seemed most unwilling to allow him to go out. Being determined, however, he carried his point, for, except a certain degree of weakness consequent upon loss of blood, and the painful and fatiguing journey, no reason against it could be assigned ; but, while he was dressing, the doctor went forth and held a rapid and earnest conversation with two or three officers whom he met. There were others to whom he did not stop to speak at all, but proceeded on his way to the colonel's. Mrs. Pelham and Lieutenant Glenham were seated on the piazza.

"And how is Mr. Truscott now?" inquired her ladyship.

"Rested and doing very well, madame, and yet he must be very prudent. Can I see the colonel?"

"You will find him in the parlor, doctor." And as he entered the house she turned to Mr. Glenham : "Now, Arthur, be firm and lose no time. You are to ride in half an hour, so it had better be settled at once."

Glenham rose, and merely saying, "I suppose you are right," with a countenance in which perturbation and distress of mind were vividly portrayed, walked uneasily along the row. Nearing the adjutant's quarters he looked back. There on the southernmost piazza stood Mrs. Pelham watching him. His face turned a shade paler, his teeth set, and he sprang up the steps and knocked at the door which for over a year he had banged open or shut without formality of any kind. It was opened by the hospital attendant.

"Can I see Lieutenant Truscott?" he asked.

"Hullo, Glenham! Come right in. Glad to see you," rang Truscott's voice from the sitting-room, and with extended hand and welcoming face he stepped to the doorway.

In a constrained, embarrassed, half-dazed manner Glenham took the hand and dropped it.

"I came to see you yesterday, Truscott, but they said you were not to be disturbed;" and as he spoke he stood uneasily at the door.

"Come in, Glenham," said Truscott. "Close the door and wait outside," he continued, turning to the soldier. "Come in *here*." And slowly Truscott turned again and looked him searchingly in the face. The younger man could not meet his eye. He went and leaned his elbow upon the sideboard, his head upon his hand.

"You have something to tell me, youngster, and you don't know how to begin," said Truscott, gravely and kindly. "What is it?"

For a moment Glenham answered not. His eyes were fixed on a picture of the Yosemite that hung

upon the wall, but he tapped his top-boot impatiently with a little stick he carried. At last he broke forth, straightening himself and speaking rapidly; speaking as though by rote, as though it were a lesson he had learned and was now repeating; speaking in desperate haste, as though afraid either to stop or to be stopped, as though he feared his resolution might fail him.

"*I have* something to say. It is hard to do it, too, but it must be done. Your coming back suffering and wounded makes it all the harder. Truscott, I thought you were the best friend I had in the regiment. I thought you were the truest gentleman in it, but the events that have come to light recently have proven to me that you have not been fair and square with me, that you have not acted as a friend; and, as for the *other* matters, I have nothing to say, except that you cannot expect me to believe in your friendship or in you as I did. The less said the better, I suppose, and so I moved into other quarters. Even now I don't like to have you think that I am ungrateful for all the kindness you certainly showed me up to this fall, but, in future, our ways lie apart." And having said his piece, he raised his eyes, and for the first time looked Truscott in the face. "And now," he said, "I have come to ask for Miss Pelham's whip."

While he was speaking, the face of his listener was a study. Pain, incredulity, indignation, and deep sorrow, all were depicted in the set, stern expression that fastened on his features. Truscott listened without one word, but very, very pale he grew, until her name was mentioned. Then the blood leaped to his forehead, fire flashed in his eyes, his hands clinched, and Glen-

ham, who for an instant had met his gaze, looked nervously away.

For a few seconds there was dead silence. Glenham could hear the throb of his own heart. Then Truscott spoke. Measured, calm, and slow, his words, nevertheless, were sharp and clear. There was not a trace of irritation in voice or manner, neither was there aught that was repellent. The self-control was simply perfect.

"Let me clearly understand you, Glenham. Do you mean to say that you have fully satisfied yourself that I am no longer worthy your confidence and trust?"

"Well, not that; not—— Well, what I mean is that you have behaved neither as a friend to me, and, worse than that, to—to others who trusted you even more," said Glenham, desperately.

And still Truscott leaned there on the mantel, looking calmly at him.

"And your information, Glenham. Is it the result of your own observation, or what you have been told?"

"It comes to me in such a way that I cannot discredit it," said Glenham, with changing color and manifest hesitation.

"That is dodging the question. Have you seen or do you know of any act of mine to warrant your language, or is it all hearsay evidence?"

"I have seen nothing, but what I have heard is—is undeniable."

"Then on purely one-sided statements you have decided upon your course in the matter. By every right I am entitled to hear, and to hear explicitly, what your

allegations are. There are at least two sides to every story, as you ought to know; and what I had a right to expect of you was that you would never have condemned me unheard. You have done so, however, and now—let it stand. No,” he continued, holding up his hand, as Glenham attempted to speak; “I have now no desire whatever to hear or to answer your accusations. The time has passed. What is this about Miss Pelham’s whip?” he broke off, abruptly.

“I have come for it,” said Glenham, sullenly.

“Did Miss Pelham send you for it?”

“N—o; but it is her wish to have it. She has returned your spurs, and—I consider it my duty to reclaim it of you.”

“Your duty! How so?”

“Miss Pelham and myself are engaged.”

There was again a moment of intense silence. Then Truscott stepped to the wardrobe, took therefrom the dainty whip with its loop of dark-blue ribbon, and calmly handed it to Glenham without a word.

Glenham took it and moved uneasily, wretchedly, towards the door. There he paused and looked back. Truscott had resumed his position at the mantel-shelf; very pale, very stern he looked, but there was not the tremor of a nerve or muscle. And Glenham was trembling from head to foot, and knew it.

“Is there anything further?” asked Truscott, calmly.

Again Glenham hesitated. At last he muttered,—

“No, I believe not. Good-morning.”

And with that he turned and left. Truscott waited until the sound of his footsteps died away. Then he closed and locked his door, stretched himself at full

length in his easy reclining-chair, and, with his head thrown back, flung his arms over his eyes and lay there in silence.

Meantime, Mr. Glenham returned to the colonel's quarters with his prize, and Camp Sandy turned out to see him and his *fiancée* go forth on their ride.

It was a lovely December day, so bright and warm down in that deep, sheltered valley that in many of the quarters the windows were thrown open, and the flies were buzzing about as though jubilant over a renewed lease of a life that, after all, was not so much worth living. The ladies were out in force, three only being conspicuous by their absence from the front of the row. Mesdames Canker, Tanner, and Wilkins were not visible, and when the latter was not to be seen among the gatherings along the piazzas something extraordinary must be going on. Something extraordinary *was* going on in this particular instance,—Mrs. Wilkins was devoting herself to Mrs. Tanner, who was ill.

She had been failing for several days it seems, and had not been at all well since the night her husband marched away with his command. The doctor went frequently to see her, and was plainly anxious on her account, but the ladies had held aloof. That it was the proper and conventional thing for them to accost the perturbed physician—who was blessed with no wife of his own—with a perfunctory inquiry as to how Mrs. Tanner was getting along seemed to be conceded, but that it would be improper and unconventional in the last degree to go and visit the sick in this particular instance was apparently a unanimous opinion. He noted with much perplexity that the fair lips that

framed the name of the gentle sufferer were pursed up, as though shrinking from the probable besmirching that would follow its mere mention. What could it mean?

Briefly, it meant this,—and the sooner the details of this dismal episode are related and done with forever, the sooner will our story be finished and the better will it be for all parties concerned.

Colonel Pelham, it will be remembered, had summoned Captain Canker in-doors after giving his adjutant instructions to prepare for his ride in search of Tanner's column, and a very sad and trying conversation, to the colonel at least, had taken place.

"Of course you noticed where Truscott came from; I saw you did," said the colonel.

The captain bowed assent with much solemnity of mien, but said nothing, and the commanding officer, motioning him to a seat, paced up and down the floor. Grace had fled to her room, and Mrs. Pelham, wide awake by this time, divining that something unusual was going on, concluded that she wanted a glass of water, or anything in the dining-room, slipped into her wrapper and down the back-stairs through the kitchen. The front-stairs always creaked under her weight, poor lady, and of course she did not wish to be seen in such toilet. Once in the dining-room it was no difficult matter to hear the conversation going on in the parlor. It was very brief. Captain Canker went away with the injunction of secrecy on his lips, but, with wild excitement and unmistakable delight, Mrs. Pelham heard enough to convince her that Mr. Truscott had been at Captain Tanner's quarters long after midnight, and was

virtually detected there by her husband. More than that, she had heard him say to Captain Canker,—

“Then you will call upon him for an explanation immediately upon his return, and of course, if it prove unsatisfactory, his resignation must follow.”

Poor Pelham! Attached as he was to his adjutant, the insidious statements of his wife, the letter of Mrs. Treadwell, the admission of Captain Canker that the matter had been a source of regimental gossip for a long time past, and finally, the very suspicious appearance of Mr. Truscott at Tanner's quarters during Tanner's absence, and long after other people had gone to bed, had together formed a combination too powerful for him. “I cannot bear to think it of him,” said he, “but the evidence is such that makes it at least necessary that he should leave this post.”

An hour after, when he came up-stairs to his room, Mrs. Pelham had waylaid him and added fresh information of her own against Truscott, who was then speeding on his mission down the valley.

“Nothing must be said of this, Dolly,” said the colonel, very miserably. “Of course, Mr. Truscott will be called to account on his return, and Captain Tanner will be properly notified.”

Nothing said of it, indeed! Before Jack Truscott was twelve hours on his way mysterious whisperings were to be heard among the denizens of officers' row. Ladies were flitting to and fro; significant glances shot from eye to eye; such words as “How shocking!” might have been heard murmured by rosy lips. Even those dear girls, the Crandalls, down for a few days' visit from Prescott, were observed to take a lively in-

terest in the murmured confab between the matrons on Mrs. Turner's piazza. Then the colonel had been moody and forlorn at the office, had hardly spoken to Bucketts, had had a long, confidential talk with Captain Canker, with whom he rarely consorted, and Lieutenant Hunter had been sent for, and the three were closeted together for an hour, and at afternoon stables were again seen in close conversation; and Mrs. Pelham had spent that hour at Mrs. Turner's, with her and with Mrs. Raymond, and later had had a long talk with Glenham; but Grace,—Grace did not leave her room all day.

Nothing said of it, indeed! Inside of forty-eight hours: even while Truscott lay weak and pale from loss of blood down under the cold rocks of the Black Mesa; even while Mrs. Tanner, lonely and heart-sick, was lying on a bed of pain, gasping for breath, and longing for the presence of her devoted husband. Even while he, spurring from one savage conflict, was about leading his men in a gallant dash upon a concealed and powerful foe,—this was how it was told to more than one household at department headquarters. Even the virgin modesty of one, perhaps both, of those dear Crandall girls had not been proof against the delirious rapture of imparting such tidings. "Only think of it!" one (perhaps both) had written, "at two o'clock this morning Mr. Truscott was found at Mrs. Tanner's (you know the captain is away), and he was ordered out of the post by Colonel Pelham at once. She, of course, is prostrate, unable to see any one, even if any one went," etc., etc., etc. "Mrs. Turner has just told us. Everybody is so shocked."

Pah ! Not to be spoken of, indeed ! Even among his brother officers, who was there to stand up for Jack Truscott and stamp the thing as a lie ? Who was there to act for Tanner and crush the vile slander in the throat of the first man who dared to breathe it ? Who was there to demand that no steps should be taken, no more be said, until he who stood accused could return and face his accusers ? Not Canker. He believed him guilty. Not Glenham. Mrs. Pelham had taken care that he should be fully informed of everything she knew and much that she did not ; and he now believed Truscott guilty of treachery to himself and dishonor towards Tanner. Not Raymond. He was one of the many who, knowing nothing against a man, believing him true and worthy, yet dare not stand up for him against such odds, for fear that it might be true after all, and then he would have made a fool of himself. Not Crane, Carroll, or Hunter. We know what manner of men they were. But where was sturdy old Bucketts ? Where was Turner ?

Bucketts was one of those men who seeing others conversing in whispers would walk away. . He didn't want to know what men felt obliged to talk of in that way. Turner was another, and so was the doctor. Thus it happened that as no one man in the garrison wanted to broach the subject to either of the three, as two of them were destitute of the natural sources of such information, and the wife of the third had good reasons of her own for saying nothing to her lord and master on the subject,—thus it had happened that not until the third day after Truscott's departure did the story come to the ears of Bucketts, and then there was a row. It came

about in this way. Glenham notified him of his intention of moving at once from Truscott's quarters into Dana's, and in his confused explanation he let drop some allusions to a total rupture of his relations with the adjutant, for which Bucketts soundly rated him, so that Glenham, goaded and stung, had rushed into a detailed account of the whole scandal as he understood it, poor boy! and Bucketts, foaming with indignation, had called upon Turner. Turner had fired up instantaneously and demanded of his wife what she knew, and then returning to the quartermaster's, they had held a brief consultation, had gone to the colonel, and placed their views before him.

"As a matter of simple justice, Colonel Pelham, I ask that you take no steps in this matter until Mr. Truscott is given an ample opportunity to explain," said Captain Turner. "I am confident of his innocence, and more than confident of hers. What is more, I think that every effort should be made to stop all talk at once. Mrs. Tanner, too, is ill." And Colonel Pelham had risen and warmly shaken hands with the captain, and thanked him for the first words of cheer and confidence he had heard. Then Turner went home and asked Mrs. Turner whether she had been to see Mrs. Tanner in her illness; finding that she had not, he marched her forthwith to Tanner's quarters. Mrs. Tanner was not well enough to see them, and begged to be excused.

"Please say to Mrs. Tanner that Captain and Mrs. Turner called, and that they beg to know if they can do anything to assist her. May we not take Rosalie a while?" asked Turner in a loud, hearty voice, that

reached the invalid as she lay upon the lounge in her room; and then meeting Mr. Hunter, he had scowled at him so blackly that that young gentleman concluded it best not to call there that evening, as had been his intention.

As for Bucketts, he and the colonel had some further talk, at the expiration of which the quartermaster had stumped across parade, and meeting Captain Canker, had stared him in the face and cut him dead.

And then Mrs. Wilkins had come to the fore. The story reached her as quick as it did the majority of the ladies, and after staring a minute in blank amaze at her informant, she demanded to know how it had reached him, for, in this case at least, Mr. Wilkins was the transmitter. Then, as it came from her husband, the lady promptly averred that she didn't believe a word of it, and next she had gone off to extract all that could be told by the not unwilling lips of Mrs. Turner, "who had everything direct from Mrs. Pelham herself."

Now such was the element of antagonism in this unterrified lady that she needed only this announcement to convince her that the whole story was an outrage. Of course Mrs. Turner properly hoped it might prove so, and trusted that Mrs. Tanner might be vindicated. "But it all looked very queer."

"Trash!" said Mrs. Wilkins. "I suppose I've found fault with Mrs. Tanner like the rest of you (it sounded almost like the rest o' ye's), and as for Jack Truscott, I suppose he laughs at me; but mind you, Mrs. Turner, there's plenty of ways to explain this, and I don't believe there's a thought of wrong in that

little woman, and I'll go to her the first thing to-morrow."

And so she did, and never hinting at anything out of the way in the garrison, and parrying everything like a question as to whether any of the other ladies had come to see her, very useful had she made herself about the house, and very much had she cheered her patient and grateful little friend, so that towards afternoon on the day succeeding Mr. Truscott's return she was down on the piazza and eager to see him. The doctor joined her as she sat there with Mrs. Wilkins, warmly congratulating her upon her improvement, and then Truscott came. Oh, how pale, how strange he looked! No wonder her soft brown eyes filled with tears as she gazed up into his face and pressed his cold hand. He who had been her faithful friend through everything, he who had so recently shared her husband's dangers and successes.

"Why, Jack! How ill you look! You ought to be stretched out here in this chair,—not I. You must have suffered terribly."

But he smiled gently, seated himself by her side, and with Rosalie upon his knee and the eyes of Mrs. Wilkins and the doctor closely watching him, he told the story of the stirring fight. Catching sight of him, Turner and Bucketts joined the little party, and when the story was done all sat there chatting, and Mrs. Pelham coming suddenly upon her own piazza, stared as she saw the gathering at Mrs. Tanner's. Then there rose the sudden clatter of hoofs, and Grace Pelham and Mr. Glenham came at rapid lope along the road. With the color rushing to her cheeks, the former bowed

gravely in acknowledgment of the upraised caps of the officers, who stood as she passed, and then resumed their seats.

"Mrs. Wilkins tells me the engagement is announced," said Mrs. Tanner, and nobody seemed to feel called upon to say anything further. An orderly came running over from the office.

"A letter from the captain, mum," he said, with a grin of delight, as he handed a soiled missive to Mrs. Tanner. "Sergeant Stein is just in with despatches."

Eagerly she seized and tore it open. Then with sparkling eyes and reddening cheeks, with lips parted and her breath coming quick and fast, she hurriedly read the lines.

"Oh, thank God! thank God!" she cried, as she threw her arms around Rosalie and drew her to her bosom. "Thank God, darling, papa will be here for Christmas, and all is well. Oh, Jack, it's such glad news! Yes, read it. Read it aloud if you like," though the heightened color in her cheek warned him not to do that. "They have had another fight, and now the Indians have scattered in every direction, and they are coming home,—will be here in two days. Oh, Rosalie, aren't you glad?" And mother and child clung rapturously to one another.

"Ah, Mrs. Tanner," said the doctor, "my occupation is gone. I'll leave you now. Come, Bucketts; come, Turner. I want to chat with you a while, and leave Truscott to plan for Christmas with Rosalie." Yet, as he passed, he said in a low tone to Mrs. Wilkins,—

"Don't let her excite herself too much."

And that worthy dame nodded appreciatively.

But Bucketts, of course, had to go at once to the office to see Sergeant Stein, and get the despatches for Colonel Pelham. The colonel had been there for a few moments only immediately after guard-mounting, and then, saying he did not feel very well, had gone to his quarters. In five minutes, Major Bucketts, as acting adjutant, appeared at the colonel's door with the despatches in his hand, and was met by Mrs. Pelham.

"The colonel is sleeping now, major, and he has been far from well for two days. Is it anything important?"

"Despatches from Captain Tauner, madame, with details of another fight. I think the colonel ought to see them, as he may want to report the result at once to department headquarters."

And so Bucketts was admitted to the colonel's bedside, and found him indeed feverish and forlorn. He roused himself at the mention of despatches, and listened eagerly as the quartermaster read them aloud. Grace stole in on tiptoe, and took her father's hot hand; but there was breathless attention to every word, the colonel interjecting an occasional "good!" "tip-top!" and an enthusiastic "bully for Ray!" when, in brief, soldierly words, Captain Tanner gave high praise to that young officer for heading the dash in the second fight, and then came the "*finale*."

"I cannot close this report without expressing my great obligations to Lieutenant Truscott, to whose tireless energy the whole success of the expedition is due. Without him we would have missed the trail entirely, and it was he who guided us to the rancheria and led

the attack in person, receiving a painful wound as his share of the casualties."

Here Bucketts stopped and waited a moment. Nobody said anything.

"Bully for Truscott say I," remarked Major Bucketts, very calmly, on satisfying himself that no one else proposed to express commendation where his friend was concerned. Then he finished the despatches, and waited for instructions.

"Have copies made of these to be sent by to-morrow's mail with my report, major, and I want a brief synopsis to be sent at once by telegraph. I suppose I'll have to do it myself," he added, drearily. Already he missed beyond expression the arm on which he was accustomed to lean. He hated to write. Everything of that kind fell on Truscott's shoulders. The colonel had only to indicate what he needed and it was ready for his signature on his desk ; but now he could not ask Truscott.

"How is Mr. Truscott?" he asked, moodily.

"Much better, sir. I left him talking with Mrs. Tanner, who has just been receiving our congratulations," said Bucketts, with a tone largely suggestive of "Whether *you* like it or not," as he looked squarely at Lady Pelham. It is to be feared that in his zeal for his friend the quartermaster was not strengthening his own position, a thing that is of so rare occurrence as to warrant its being made a note of. Then Major Bucketts bowed himself out, and went back to the adjutant's office, where for some time he was busied over the recent despatches. After making out the "synopsis," he carried his work to Truscott, who was still seated on Mrs. Tanner's piazza ; and as he approved, the

necessary copy was made and carried to the colonel for his signature. Stable-call had sounded when Major Bucketts turned to leave the colonel. The latter called him back.

"Bucketts, just close that door and come here, will you?"

The quartermaster obeyed.

"Has anything been said? Has Canker spoken to Mr. Truscott yet?"

"I do not know, sir. I had no idea that it was your intention to delegate this matter to Captain Canker," said Bucketts, a tremor of surprise and indignation betraying itself in his voice.

The colonel colored hotly under the unmistakable reproach in the staff-officer's tone. Oh, Bucketts, had you not learned in your years of army service that discretion was the better part of valor, when defending a friend against a commander's ire?

"There were reasons why Captain Canker was selected to speak for me," said the colonel, with much dignity and reserve; "but now it may be well to postpone action until Captain Tanner's return, since he is so soon to be here. You will see Canker at stables, and may say so for me." And then Bucketts withdrew.

That evening as the officers came strolling back from the mess-room they noted with surprise an unusual gathering in front of the colonel's quarters. A broad light streamed from the open doorway, and in it, only partially dressed, with ashen face and holding an open despatch in his hand, stood Colonel Pelham apparently questioning two soldiers in rough scouting-rig, who had dismounted and were holding their panting horses by the rein. One of them was weeping like a woman.

Grace, covering her face in her hands, ran back into the house. Glenham, white as a sheet, stood beside the colonel, dazed and stupefied.

"What's happened?" asked some of the party; and Truscott and the doctor, walking together behind the rest, hurried eagerly forward just in time to see Mrs. Pelham throw a shawl over her shoulders and scurry up the row.

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Pelham, in a voice choking with emotion, "we have lost our best. Captain Tanner was killed last night at sunset."

For an instant there was an awful stillness, broken only by the sobs of one of the soldiers, who had buried his face in his horse's mane and thrown his arms around the sturdy neck. Then the doctor spoke.

"God of heaven! Who can break it to her?"

"Mrs. Pelham has gone," said Glenham, briefly.

"*What!* Mrs. Pelham! For God's sake stop her!"

Two men sprang from the group and rushed in pursuit,—Truscott and the doctor. Her hand was on the bell as the latter seized it.

"Mrs. Pelham, stop!" said he. "I adjure you not to speak to her."

"Why not, pray? Who but the commanding officer's wife should be the first to tender sym—" The door opened and she attempted to enter. Instantly she was seized. The doctor's arms were round her waist, Truscott had her hand.

"Madame, you must not—" said the former; but she furiously interrupted him.

"Unhand me, I say! Who dares restrain me! This outrage——"

And here with alarm upon her face Mrs. Tanner

came running into the hall. Truscott sprang within the door.

"Get her away quick, doctor," he muttered, and then, taking Mrs. Tanner's hand, strove to lead her back into the parlor, but in his death-like pallor she saw the awful premonition.

"My husband?" she gasped. "What is it? Quick!" and then the doctor saw it was too late. He too sprang to her side, releasing Mrs. Pelham, who between rage, agitation, and possibly genuine emotion burst into tears and threw herself forward with outstretched arms.

"Oh, my poor stricken friend! Oh, poor little——" And then Rosalie's agonized cry rang out upon the parade.

"Oh, mamma, mamma! Have they killed my papa?"

Now with wild, dilated eyes she looks from one to another. What need to ask? In one frightful second the whole truth flashes over her. The soft little white hands are thrown tightly clinched in air; she totters: one gasping cry issues from her ashen lips and down she would have gone to earth but for the strong arms that seize and raise her.

White as her own is Truscott's face as he bears her up the stairs. He looks back for one instant as others come rushing in, and sterner, lower than ever before, they hear the words,—

"Get that woman away! Doctor, come quick!"

"It is heart-disease, madame, and you would have killed her," says the doctor, as he hands her ladyship over to the colonel, who all too late has come tearing after her.

CHAPTER XIX.

THAT was a wretched night at Sandy. Accustomed as the regiment had been to battle, and murder, and sudden death, there was something indescribably mournful in the circumstances attending Tanner's tragic fate. He had been sent away on the very anniversary of the death of his first-born, refusing in his soldierly way to allow the commanding officer to be informed of a fact that might lead to a change in the detail, since there were so many ready and eager to go in his stead. He had had two sharp and successful encounters with the very band which he had been sent out to punish, and, having scattered them to the four winds, was joyfully on his way homeward to join his dearly-loved wife and little ones in time for Christmas; had written the glad news of his coming (Ah, was she not re-reading that blessed letter to Rosalie when the blow came?), and, when only two days' march away from the post, as they bivouacked at evening beside a rapid-running stream, he and some two or three men had stolen forth to "stalk" a deer they saw on a hill-side not five hundred yards away. Half an hour afterwards four shots were heard in quick succession, then shouts and scattering shots, and Ray, springing to his feet, seized his carbine, and, with a yell of "Come on,—*lively*, men!" had darted off through the thickets. In three minutes

they were standing over Tanner's lifeless body. Too late to succor, but not too late to avenge. It seems that three or four Indians, relatives probably of the prisoners whom they were bringing in, had followed the command on its homeward march, and from their ambush among the rocks it had been an easy thing to pick off the captain as he crept up the hill-side, intent only on getting a shot at the deer. Two rifle-bullets had pierced him through and through, and death must have been instantaneous. The skulking foe of course had fled, but Ray had his scouts in pursuit in less than no time, and long before dark two were overtaken and died fighting. Two of Tanner's own men were sent forward with a brief report of the sad affair, hurriedly written by Lieutenant Ray, and on the following morning the detachment, bringing the lifeless remains of their late commander, resumed their march in bitter sorrow.

And now, what was the effect in the garrison? The tidings flew from mouth to mouth, and in shocked, solemn silence the news was heard by officers and men. In the entire regiment no man had been more universally respected than Tanner, few, if any, were as popular; but, deeply as they mourned him, the one question that seemed to rise first to all lips was, "How will she bear it?" All hearts seemed to turn at once to her, and women who but yesterday would resent the faintest word of praise lavished upon Mrs. Tanner were now flocking to her quarters, where she lay hovering 'twixt life and death.

Mrs. Wilkins had been the first to hurry in, summoned by the doctor, and very soon Truscott had come

down-stairs and taken sobbing, terrified, lonely little Rosalie in his arms. Presently Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Turner appeared, and with awe and sympathy in their faces begged the doctor to let them be of some assistance. He was flitting nervously to and fro: now up in the sick-room, where she lay moaning and senseless; now coming to the parlor to exchange a few words with Truscott. Then he had telegraphed to Prescott, begging that his comrade, the post-surgeon at Whipple, might be sent at once. Lady after lady had striven to induce Rosalie to leave Truscott's arms and come to her for the night, but she seemed to shrink from all and to turn shudderingly, clingingly, with fresh outbursts of tears, to him; and, despite the pain it caused him, Jack held her to his breast and strove to soothe her to sleep. At last, just as the first call for tattoo was sounding, worn out with her wild grief, the sunny, curly head drooped upon his shoulder and the heavy eyelids closed in slumber. Still he carried her to and fro, as he had when she was a mite of a baby, and as he looked down into the innocent, helpless, trusting little face, never more to know a father's kiss and blessing, great tears stole from his own hot eyes, and burying his worn, haggard face among her bonny curls, Jack Truscott sobbed silently in his grief. And on this picture Grace Pelham entered, looked one moment with a world of wistfulness, of entreaty, of love, tenderness, sympathy and utter misery in her swimming eyes, then turned and fled—unseen.

All that weary night Truscott haunted the parlor, while the doctor and Mrs. Wilkins kept watch and ward o'erhead. Sometimes he snatched a few minutes

of broken sleep upon the sofa, but morning found him pale and haggard and looking worse than when he returned from the scout.

"This will never do, Jack," said the doctor. "You must go home and get to bed." But Truscott avowed his intention of going with the ambulance to meet the remains. There seemed to be nothing he could do there. She had recovered consciousness once towards morning, but only to fall away again. "Still," said the doctor, "if we can only keep her quiet we may pull her through. It is the waking I dread as much as anything else."

At stables in the morning Colonel Pelham did not appear. A group of officers—Canker, Crane, Carroll, and Glenham—were in conversation, when Truscott walked rapidly past them, merely nodding, and entered the quartermaster's corral. Coming out again, he was heard to say, as though speaking to the driver of the ambulance,—

"Come round to my quarters, then. I'll be ready in fifteen minutes."

With that he was again passing them, when the senior officer, near whom was standing an orderly, called to him,—

"Mr. Truscott!"

"What is it?" said the adjutant, surprised at the formality of the salutation, but not checking his rapid walk.

"I wish to see you, sir," called Captain Canker after him, reddening with chagrin as he did so.

"I'm in a hurry now, captain," replied Truscott, absently. "Come to my quarters." And on he went,

plunged in his gloomy thoughts, and in an instant had entered the band-stables, out of sight.

Canker fairly snapped with rage. Treated with disrespect and indignity by the very officer of all others whom he most desired to get upon the hip—the very officer whom it was now in his power doubly to humiliate. Ignored in his high position as commander of the post, now that Colonel Pelham was sick in quarters, what better opportunity needed he?

“You heard that language, gentlemen!” he exclaimed. “Mr. Carroll, Mr. Glenham, come with me.” And hurrying after the adjutant, Captain Canker entered the band-stables in high dudgeon.

“Captain,” suggested Carroll, “I’m certain that Truscott had no idea you were in command of the post.”

“That’s d—d nonsense, sir! It’s his business to know.”

And though Mr. Carroll was confident that, being on sick report, and furthermore, utterly taken up with his cares at Tanner’s quarters, Mr. Truscott did not know that the colonel had again taken to his bed and turned over the command at reveille to the senior captain, he was diplomatic enough to hold his peace. It is always safer to let a comrade get rapped over the knuckles undeservingly than to attempt to restrain the impetuosity of such commanders as Canker, and of many another not exactly like him; and, besides, Carroll possibly wanted to see how “His Infallibility,” as Truscott had once been nicknamed, would stand a reprimand.

They found him in earnest conversation with the

sergeant-major and with the corporal of Tanner's troop who had brought in the news. He did not notice their approach.

Canker rapidly stepped to his side, his eyes flashing, his face flushed with passion.

"Mr. Truscott, did you hear me say that I wished to see you?"

"Certainly, captain," said Jack, very calmly, but looking vastly surprised at the sudden appearance of this irate captain and his satellites.

"Then how dare you pass me by, sir?" and at the furious, undignified tone the men looked up in amaze. Every brush and curry-comb seemed to need cleaning at that minute, and the non-commissioned staff and band, almost to a man, ceased grooming.

Worn, wearied, harassed both mentally and physically, Truscott was in no condition to calmly submit to an unjust overhauling from a man of Canker's calibre. The blood rushed to his face at the arrogance, the utter lack of consideration, of decency in the captain's manner. But with perfect self-poise, despite it all, he courteously spoke.

"I had no idea that you were in command of the post, as I presume you must be."

"You ought to have known it, sir, if you had sense enough to know anything."

And now Mr. Carroll was turning away in disgust, and Glenham stood a picture of indignant helplessness. Truscott turned from red to white, and looked squarely into Canker's eyes as the latter stormed furiously on.

"I've had abundant opportunity to remark your discourtesy and slights on previous occasions, sir, and now

you have the insolence to ignore my authority as commanding officer in the presence of the command. I——”

“One moment, captain,” said Truscott, raising his hand deprecatingly, and speaking with the utmost self-control and respect. “Let me repeat, that I had no idea you were in command. I was deeply engrossed in thought of far different matters. I thought you merely wished to speak to me about some personal affairs, as I’m not on duty as adjutant this——”

“No, by God!” burst in Canker, to whom Truscott’s power over himself was only an additional goad. With all the malignity of a low, tyrannical nature, what he wanted was an excuse to rasp and humiliate the adjutant, not to listen to explanations that were establishing the latter’s entire innocence of wrong so far as intent was concerned. “No, by God! you are not on duty as adjutant; and a most fortunate thing it is for the regiment that in that capacity your days are numbered.”

Truscott simply stared at him in surprise and absolute pity, and Canker saw it.

“I’m not blowing, sir, as you seem to think. Four days ago the colonel directed me to see you and request your resignation.” And still Truscott stood calm and stately. It was simply exasperating to poor Canker. Determined to break through that impenetrable armor of reserve and dignity, he flew on another tack. “You were giving some instructions to the driver of the ambulance just now. By what right, sir?”

“I merely asked him to stop for me at my quarters. I desired to go down the valley to meet Captain Tanner’s remains.”

"I have detailed Captain Turner for that purpose, sir. You cannot go."

"I did not expect to go in an official capacity, but it never occurred to me for an instant that any one would prohibit my going to meet the body of my oldest and most intimate friend."

"It is prohibited, sir, emphatically, and for excellent reason. From the colonel down, sir, it is prohibited, and it is a brazen-faced outrage on your part to expect to be allowed to go."

Even Carroll and Glenham here stepped forward as though to check him, and Carroll seized his arm.

"Captain, captain, for God's sake, not here! Think where you are."

And suddenly, as though realizing that every man was listening, Canker turned.

"I will see you again about this, Mr. Truscott, but understand,—you cannot go."

For an instant Truscott stood dazed, then hurried after them, overtaking the party at the gate. From the adjoining stables Captain Raymond and Mr. Wilkins were approaching.

"Captain Canker," said Truscott, and now fire was flashing from his eyes, "you have used words which require immediate explanation."

"I say, sir," almost shouted Canker, "that you are the last man in the regiment to be allowed to go to meet the remains of a man *we* honored, sir! *Your* conduct has been too monstrous. You have been long suspected, but now the thing is known throughout the whole garrison."

"What thing, sir?"

"Your grossly improper, *criminal*, probably, relations with Mrs. Tanner——"

Crash!

Something like a flash of lightning had seemed to shoot from Truscott's shoulder, and with a thud, plunge, and sputter Captain Canker lay sprawling on his back, after ploughing up several square feet of gravel, and Raymond and Carroll had thrown themselves on Truscott, who, a living embodiment of fury, stood glaring at the stunned foeman at his feet.

"No more of this, Truscott! I don't blame you. I heard it," said Raymond. "Go at once to your quarters. I'll see that he is looked after." And escorted by Carroll, the adjutant slowly, silently, walked away.

"Send Bucketts here at once," he said to Carroll, as he entered his hall and closed the door after him.

Meantime the other officers had raised Canker to his feet. He had been knocked half senseless by the force of the blow, and blood was streaming from his nostrils, and his eye was rapidly closing, but his first impulse on rising was to get at Truscott. He was blind with rage, and it required great effort to control him. Little by little the gravity of the situation overcame his fury, and he suffered himself to be led to his quarters; but half the command, probably, had seen the affair, and with huge delight the men were commenting on the scientific manner in which "the adjutant knocked ould Canker out of time in one crack."

Raymond was urging Canker to take no steps in the matter until he had cooled down.

"Of course the whole thing will get to the colonel's

ears at once, and you had better let him deal with the matter," said Raymond.

But Canker thought he knew his own business best, and sent at once for Major Bucketts, who stumped in with his customary expression of profound gravity, while the commanding officer was being plastered with brown paper and vinegar by the hands of his flurried and tearful wife.

"Major Bucketts, you will place Mr. Truscott in close arrest at once."

"By whose order, captain?" said Bucketts, imperturbably.

"By mine, of course, sir. I command the post."

"Very well, sir," said Bucketts, and vanished.

Ten minutes afterwards he banged the hilt of his sabre against Truscott's door and entered, finding Jack stripped to the waist, bathing, and attempting to re-bandage the gash on his breast, which recent muscular action seemed to have reopened.

"Just hold on a moment, Jack, till I commit you in due form, and then I'll help you at that. You are hereby placed in close arrest, by order of Captain Canker; and may God have mercy on your soul, and you on his'n! What did you hit him with? he's knocked all one-sided." Thus irreverently and flippantly discoursed the quartermaster, as he threw off his sabre, belt, and gauntlets and went to the assistance of his friend.

"I haven't my spurs on, Jack, but you'll observe the arrest all the same, and won't go back on me. Never mind what it's about now. Let's get you comfortable first." And by dint of some minutes' work Major

Bucketts succeeded in getting the bandage back where it belonged and Jack into his clothes and easy-chair.

Truscott lay there very pale and quiet, saying nothing, but there was a look in his face Bucketts did not like to see; something terrible in its intensity. Stepping in next door to the doctor's quarters, he found him plunging his head in cold water and listening to Carroll's excited description of the affray. The quartermaster boiled with rage when he heard the language which had called forth Truscott's blow, and then requested the doctor to come with him a moment.

"I want you to be with me when I have my talk with Jack. Of course, *now* he has got to be told the whole thing; and the question is, can he stand it now? Go and see him."

So the doctor had gone, and in the course of half an hour returned to Bucketts, saying that Truscott was calm and composed, but insisted upon knowing the uttermost detail of the story in which his good name was involved. "He will have no rest until we do tell him, and I think it best we should go at once," was the doctor's decision; so they went.

"Jack," said Bucketts, "I'll make it short as I can, yet tell you all I know, and I believe all anybody knows, and if I go wrong, doctor, you correct me. Not until the day before you got back did I know anything about it, but the doctor and myself have gone to the bottom of the whole story. For some reason Mrs. Pelham has been determined to get you away from this post. The ladies all say that, and it is mainly through them that we reached the facts. She has been steadily at work ever since you met them at Prescott in striving

to prejudice people against you, and finally she got hold of some infernal story circulated by that girl the Tan-ners discharged at Phoenix, to the effect that you had been unduly intimate with Mrs. Tanner when in Kansas, and she has been putting the colonel up to it ever since. Now of the facts I can only tell you this. She has a letter from Mrs. Treadwell saying that when Tanner was in the field you came to Phoenix, and she saw Mrs. Tanner crying in your arms in her parlor. The night Tanner left here Miss Pelham and Hunter saw Mrs. Tanner leaning in your arms out there on the bluff, and the night you were wanted when those despatches came after midnight, and you could not be found, the colonel and Canker saw you coming out of her house. I know, and the doctor knows, that it is all susceptible of explanation. But those facts were industriously circulated everywhere about the post, and we would have told you yesterday but for the doctor, who said you were not well enough."

To all this, told rapidly and quietly, Truscott listened without a word. He knit his brow at times, a look of surprise came into his face at mention of Mrs. Treadwell's name, but even after Bucketts had ceased he sat for a few moments in silence.

Then looking coolly, wearily around him, Jack rose, went to his wardrobe, took a letter from the pocket of his blouse, and returned to the fireplace.

"Bucketts," said he, "it is a fact that Mrs. Tanner did on one occasion cry in my arms at Phoenix. She probably would have done so the night Tanner marched if she had not fainted dead away, and it is also a fact that long after midnight I came from her house when

those despatches arrived. In fact, had I not heard the noise outside I would have been there an hour longer. For myself, I absolutely refuse to make any explanation *now*, but for her sake that which may seem necessary shall be done. This letter will account for my presence at Tanner's at the hour which has scandalized Camp Sandy, and, doctor, you can doubtless account for the other enumerated indiscretions. Now, Bucketts, I have a question to ask. Was it on this account that the colonel requested my resignation, as that—as Captain Canker stated this morning?"

"So Canker says, and so it has been told all over the post. Turner and I went to the colonel two days ago, and he promised us that nothing further should be said or done until you returned, and last evening he did tell me to see Canker and say to him that he desired him to say nothing to you now until Tanner's return, as he would be here in two days. I did so, but Canker seems to have gone crazy this morning."

"Then it is doubtless true that Canker's statement is correct as to the resignation," said Jack, while his teeth set almost savagely. "That, at least, I never could have believed of Pelham; he should never have delegated that message to any one. Now, gentlemen," he continued, "I have a great deal to think of this morning, and I will thank you both to come to me occasionally. You, doctor, will have to devote all possible time to Mrs. Tanner, I know, but let me hear how she is getting on. As for Captain Canker, it is not probable any message will come from him before evening, if it should then, and by that time Ray will be here."

And now we have to turn from Truscott and his

bitter reflections and look for Grace, who, of late, has appeared but seldom on the scene.

At any other time so important an announcement as that of the engagement of the beauty and belle of the regiment, the daughter of its colonel, to one of its officers, and that one its wealthiest, would have created wide commotion; but just now everything was forgotten in the fate that had overtaken Tanner, shrouded the garrison in mourning, and involved his stricken widow and his most trusted friend in so strange, so uncanny a complication. The circumstances of Grace's engagement have not been explained,—indeed, she never could satisfactorily explain them herself,—but to make a long and most unpleasant story short, her mother had speedily added the story of Truscott's midnight appearance at Tanner's to his other enormities, and this, coupled with what she had seen, so preyed upon the poor girl's jealousy and wretchedness that, yielding to her mother's representations of all Glenham's excellences, the debt they owed him for Ralph's sake, the deep wrong she was doing him in keeping him in suspense, "dangling at her apron-strings," as madame expressed it, though knowing well that she, not Grace, was there at fault, Grace Pelham had at last surrendered. "I do *not* love you," she told him, frankly. "I respect and honor and like you, no doubt, but it is not what you deserve," and he had rapturously declared that he could wait to win her love if she would but promise to let him try. And then mamma had clinched the nail by announcing the engagement, confidentially, to three or four ladies, and writing it confidentially to two or three more at department headquarters. And

Grace, receiving congratulations she would eagerly have shunned, and devotions and raptures that she absolutely shrank from, was profoundly miserable.

Coming suddenly into the Tanners' parlor at tattoo the night of the news of his death, she stopped short on seeing Truscott, and then had turned and fled. Distrusting him as she had, yet unwilling to believe in his baseness, she now saw him fondling and soothing the child of the man he was accused of having bitterly wronged, and mingling his tears with those of the innocent little one because of that man's death. No wonder hers had been an almost sleepless night, but early in the morning she was at her father's bedside. He was still far from well, though the ailment seemed to be mental rather than bodily. Lady Pelham was sleeping the sleep of the just in her own room. She had been up very late the night before, making love to her prospective son-in-law, as Mrs. Wilkins put it. Grace had plead distress and illness and gone to her room.

Soon after guard-mounting a letter was brought to the door. The servant handed it to Grace, and she, noting with faintly heightened color and trembling hand that it was addressed in Truscott's writing to the colonel, took it up-stairs, and silently placed it before him on the coverlet.

"Where are my glasses, dear?" he asked. But the glasses were not under his pillow nor on the bureau. "Read it to me, Grace."

For a moment she hung back, unwilling, then opened the note, and in a low, tremulous voice, read as follows :

"CAMP SANDY, A. T., December 20, 187—.

"COLONEL R. R. PELHAM, Commanding —th Regiment of Cavalry U.S.A.

"COLONEL,—I have the honor to tender my resignation of the adjutancy of the regiment.

"Very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN G. TRUSCOTT,

"1st Lieut. —th Cavalry."

"He gives no reason?" asked the colonel, after a long and painful pause.

"Nothing, father."

Then there was another pause.

"Grace, I want to see Major Bucketts," said he, at last.

And presently Major Bucketts came, and, after ushering him in, she left the room.

"Bucketts," said the colonel, peevishly, "I thought I told you to tell Canker not to mention this matter to Mr. Truscott until—until Tanner got back."

"You did, sir."

"Didn't you do it?"

"Certainly, I did, sir. At stables yesterday."

"But here's Truscott's resignation, and, d—n it! I wanted the thing stopped until—well, for the present anyhow. Where is Captain Canker? Has he had anything to do with this, do you know?"

"He is in his quarters, sir, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, he had all to do with it."

"That's horribly awkward," said the colonel, sitting up in bed. "Has Truscott gone to meet the body?"

"No, sir."

"He hasn't? Why, I supposed, of course, he would go."

"He wanted to go, sir, but Captain Canker refused permission." And it was evident that the quartermaster was grimly enjoying the conversation.

"Canker refused him! Why, what's the man thinking of? Truscott *ought* to have gone. Where is he?"

"In close arrest, sir, in his quarters."

"*What!* What's happened?" exclaimed Pelham, already half out of bed.

"Captain Canker took it upon himself to use very dangerous language to Mr. Truscott at stables. I did not hear it, and prefer not to repeat what I was told, but there is no doubt of the fact that Truscott knocked him flat, and that Canker is spending the morning drawing up charges and specifications by the quire."

"Go and say to the captain that I resume command at once," said the colonel, slipping out of bed with astonishing activity. "Then come to the office, both of you."

Doleful indeed was Captain Canker's appearance when telling his tale to the colonel half an hour afterwards. His left eye was covered with a broad bandage, and his nose and cheek were discolored and contused. Trembling still with indignation and excitement was the captain, and, after listening patiently to his recital, which, of course, made no allusion to his insulting, overbearing manner, and somewhat inaccurately represented his language, and very inaccurately represented Truscott's conduct, Pelham spoke very moderately and kindly.

"It is, of course, a most flagrant breach of discipline, and Mr. Truscott must be held accountable. I shall confirm the arrest; and yet, Captain Canker, did you not receive a message from me directing you to postpone further action; not to say anything, in fact, until—well, for the present?"

"I did, sir," said Canker, coloring painfully; "but I was justly indignant at his ignoring my position as commanding officer, and Captain Tanner could never return to us now, and I was outraged, I suppose, at the idea of Mr. Truscott's being allowed to appear as his friend. Well, there were a dozen reasons why I thought he ought to be informed at once that his crime was known."

Pelham winced at the word. Already he was beginning to believe an awful mistake had been made. He fidgeted uneasily in his chair.

"But how came you to speak of his resignation? That wasn't necessary that I can see."

And Canker had no satisfactory explanation to offer, and left the colonel's office in a very unpleasant frame of mind. Then Pelham sent for Raymond, Carroll, and Glenham, and questioned them as eye-witnesses. Crane and Wilkins also were summoned, and despite every effort on their part to say as little as possible any way, the fact became pretty clearly established that Canker had behaved in an outrageously unbecoming if not insulting manner. And awfully ill at ease and unhappy the colonel found himself at the end of his two hours' confabulation with those gentlemen.

Meantime, Bucketts sat fuming in the adjutant's chair. In his pocket he had Tanner's last letter to

Truscott, one that would have forcibly shaken the colonel and his *confrères*, but Truscott had forbidden Bucketts and the doctor to make its contents known until after the colonel had acted upon his resignation.

For a long time after the officers had gone, Colonel Pelham sat there at his desk in deep perplexity. All over the garrison people were talking of the exciting events of the day. Everybody knew that Truscott was in close arrest. Everybody had heard that Canker had virtually demanded the resignation of the adjutancy in the colonel's name. Everybody heard in some mysterious way that the resignation had been tendered, and all were eagerly speculating on the upshot. This, too, when only a few miles away now the lifeless body of their gallant comrade was being borne back to the post, and, all unconscious of that or any other fact, poor little Mrs. Tanner lay in her darkened room more dead than alive.

At last the colonel rose and came to Bucketts' desk.

"Have you had any conversation with Mr. Truscott about this affair?" said he.

"Yes, sir," said Bucketts, promptly.

"Did he—does he explain this—I mean—his very suspicious relations with Mrs. Tanner?" asked Pelham. And very hesitatingly he asked, and painfully embarrassed he looked.

Bucketts paused.

"I do not know that I have any right to answer that question, colonel. In the absence of Turner and Ray, the doctor and myself seemed to be the only friends left to him. He feels most keenly the manner in which the matter was brought to his notice, and as

no defence was necessary where the doctor or myself were concerned he made none." And blushing very much but still looking steadfastly at his commander, Bucketts went on: He liked his colonel,—was greatly attached to him in fact,—but was stung to the quick by the deep trouble brought upon his friend by the weakness and mismanagement of that officer.

"Do you mean to say that he has a satisfactory explanation?"

"Most assuredly, colonel."

"Then why does he not come forward with it, or express a desire to do so? It is my right to know it."

"He certainly would have done so, sir, and you must pardon me if I seem wanting in respect, had you yourself sent for him and represented the allegations against him and given him an opportunity. Instead of that, at this most trying time, when he has just returned from very distinguished service, is wounded and sick, his best friend killed, he finds you holding aloof from him, and a man whom he—whom we all dislike,—whom you yourself never selected as an intimate before,—*now* chosen to represent you in a most delicate office, and you see how—how he did it." And here Bucketts' voice rose and trembled and grew husky. "Again, colonel, I beg your pardon if I speak too strongly, but—I feel very strongly."

Redder and redder Pelham had grown.

"Do you mean that he will refuse to explain the matter now?" he asked.

"For Mrs. Tanner's sake he may explain," answered Bucketts; "for his own I am not prepared to say."

"Well, send for him, anyhow. I want to see him at

once," said the colonel, with a nervous twitching about his face. It was plain that he was nettled, miserable, and dissatisfied with himself and everybody else.

And so it happened that Jack Truscott, to his great surprise, as he sat talking with Raymond and Carroll, received a summons to come at once to the commanding officer's presence. A dozen pairs of eyes watched him as he walked slowly down the line, for he was still far from well, and many were the speculations as to the meaning of this move.

Presently, cap in hand, he appeared at the office-door and knocked. Pelham had watched him as he came, and with a shock of distress noted how very pale and haggard he looked; but as he entered and stood erect before his colonel, his head seem carried even higher, his bearing was calm as ever, but haughty. He said not a word.

"Mr. Truscott," said Pelham, "I have sent for you because it is most necessary that a very unpleasant matter should be cleared up at once. I am given to understand by your friends that you are perfectly able to explain away all suspicion that may have attached to your conduct of late, and, if so, and you are entirely innocent in the matter, your violence to Captain Canker this morning may in a measure be condoned,—and other—other disagreeable features be suppressed. Are you prepared to offer such explanation?"

"No, sir." And the answer was prompt, but so stern and low that Pelham fairly started.

"Do you mean that you have no explanation?"

"I mean that after the language of the officer selected as your spokesman this morning I will not con-

descend to defend myself, sir. The time for that has passed."

"Are you aware—do you realize that your refusal makes it my duty to proceed to take action in your case?" And the colonel's voice trembled so that he could hardly speak, and he could not look at Truscott.

"Perfectly, sir."

"Then that is all, Mr. Truscott," said the colonel. And that night at retreat everybody knew that the adjutant was "broken," and was wondering who would be the next victim.

It was late in the evening when the detachment, now commanded by Lieutenant Ray, escorting Tanner's honored remains, reached Sandy and scattered to quarters. Ray did not wait for any change of raiment. After having placed the body in charge of the doctors at the hospital, he went at once to Truscott's quarters, and that evening Turner, Raymond, Ray, and Bucketts spent in earnest consultation with the ex-adjutant. Down at the store various congenial spirits were solemnly discussing the situation over their toddies.

"What do you think will happen now?" asked Mr. Wilkins of the group gathered about the store.

"Well, Ray has been with Truscott for the last hour," said Mr. Hunter, "and I'll bet that there will be a circus if he is called in."

"What do you want to bet Ray isn't made adjutant?"

"Anything you like, Wilkins, for the simple reason that madame wants that place for son-in-law Arty," replied an irreverent youth, but it would be unkind to mention his name.

CHAPTER XX.

ON the following morning the preparations for Captain Tanner's funeral were complete. There had been a decided halt for a few moments when it came to the selection of the pall-bearers, as they had to be chosen by Colonel Pelham, poor Mrs. Tanner being still too desperately ill to more than faintly realize where she was or to recognize those who stood at her bedside. The colonel's heart was sore against Truscott; for, while he could not say that his manner had been in the least disrespectful on the previous afternoon, he could complain and did complain that there was a spice of insubordination in the subaltern's total refusal to offer any explanation. He resented the fact that Truscott evidently resented his conduct. He was stung to think that Truscott had friends to whom he readily furnished the proofs of his innocence, yet forbade their using them "officially"; and although he felt and knew that had he himself asked Truscott for these proofs in the first place, they would have been promptly set before him, he refused to see that, in having made Captain Canker his minister plenipotentiary for the time being, he had given Truscott good cause for his action in declining to defend himself at the eleventh hour. The more he heard of Canker's language and manner in the now famous interview the less he liked it, the more he real-

ized that he had made an awful blunder in intrusting such a matter to him, and the more peevish and irritable the poor old gentleman grew. Just at retreat the evening of his brief conversation with Truscott, Dr. Clayton, the post-surgeon, had met him and announced the arrival of the physician from Fort Whipple, and that the latter said it was more than probable that the general and some of his staff would come down to be present at Tanner's funeral. Telegrams very congratulatory in their tone had been flying over the wires from Prescott ever since Truscott's return with the news of the first fight. Then there came frequent inquiries by wire after Truscott's health; then a deeply sympathetic message announcing the receipt of the tidings of Tanner's death; then inquiries after Mrs. Tanner, and then they stopped coming to him entirely, though the doctor received frequent despatches. This added to Colonel Pelham's fretfulness. It was mere accident and no slight whatever was intended, but he believed that in some way news of the Truscott-Canker affray had reached headquarters and that his conduct as post-commander was disapproved,—or something,—and, being a loyal adherent of the commanding general and a faithful friend, it worried him inexpressibly.

The telegraph operator denied having sent any despatch relating to the affair, but it had been suspected on more than one occasion that Corcoran had sent "confidential" messages on his own account to the operator there, and this was so spicy a piece of news that it was more than believed that he had communicated the whole story, with probable theories and comments of his own. Certain it is that before sunset that day a

rumor was in circulation at Fort Whipple that Captain Canker had received a terrific thrashing at the hands of the adjutant, that a duel was imminent, and then that Truscott was in arrest and to be tried by court-martial.

"Has Dr. Harper seen Mrs. Tanner yet?" asked Pelham, anxiously.

"Not yet, sir. We are going in together as soon as he has changed his dress; he is at my quarters now,—at least he will be in a minute;" and the doctor looked uneasily up the row, and that led Pelham also to look the same way. And as they did so, Dr. Harper came forth from the adjutant's, the ex-adjutant's quarters by this time, and the colonel reddened as he saw it. Everybody whom he most liked and respected was evidently in sympathy with Truscott. No one went to inquire after Canker and his black eye, yet here, the moment the post-surgeon from Fort Whipple arrived, he must needs run in to see Truscott before going anywhere else. Pelham fairly winced.

"Look here, doctor," he said, impatiently. "You know—I suppose everybody knows by this time—how your patient has been compromised by Mr. Truscott's conduct, and I suppose you know that he positively declined to offer any explanation when I called upon him for it."

"I do, sir," said the doctor, gravely.

"Well, I'm told that he *has* explained matters to one or two officers, yourself included, though he refused to explain to me, who had the best right to know. Also I'm told that you are convinced of his entire innocence."

"I never doubted it, sir, much less hers."

"Then, doctor, I think it your business to give me your reasons. If I've done him—or—or anybody else injustice, I want to know it; but I'm confounded if I can see how he can explain what—what has been seen by everybody," said poor Pelham, irritably.

Dr. Clayton merely bowed.

"You will not give your reasons?"

"Not now, sir," and the doctor was scrupulously respectful in tone and manner.

The colonel turned short on his heel and entered the house. Glenham was seated with Grace in the parlor, and Grace, looking far from well, glanced up eagerly and wistfully in her father's face. He went up-stairs without a word.

Late that evening a despatch arrived saying that the general with Colonel Wickham and Mr. Bright of his staff were on their way to Sandy, and would arrive by noon on the following day. In the morning, therefore, he had to select the pall-bearers, and before breakfast Lady Pelham began her questioning. She had heard with eager satisfaction the announcement of Truscott's relief from duty as adjutant of the regiment; she had already paved the way, she thought, for the appointment of a successor suitable to herself, and yet, so long as Truscott remained at the post she could not rest content: he was dangerous, she argued, and must be gotten rid of. An order assigning him to duty with one of the troops serving in the southern part of the Territory was what she wanted, if indeed he did not have to quit the service entirely; but the death of Captain Tanner had put an unexpected bar on that plan, as his troop was now left without an officer "present

for duty," the senior lieutenant of the regiment who would succeed to the captaincy being, as is not unusual in such cases, on detached duty in an Eastern city, with no intention whatsoever of throwing up his detail as an aide-de-camp so long as his regiment was roughing it in Arizona. This she saw would be likely to result in Truscott's being ordered to assume command of Tanner's troop. Then came his affray with Canker, his arrest and prospective court-martial, and now, to her dismay, she realized that not only was that going to detain him at the post, but that already everybody was beginning to veer around, and public sympathy was largely excited in favor of the very people whom she had been instrumental in bringing into trouble. Madame felt the ground giving way beneath her feet. Already she had learned that, while Truscott had indignantly refused to utter a word in his defence, his utter innocence of wrong in thought or deed had been so clearly established that his friends were triumphant, his enemies disconcerted, and the ladies who but two days before were whispering all manner of scandal at the expense of poor little Mrs. Tanner, now found it expedient to hold their tongues and wait. It was getting unpopular to say anything that might be construed as an insinuation against her, and at all hours of the day the gentle and forgiving creatures had been swarming to her quarters to see if there really wasn't something they could do. And that evening as a party of them stood talking in low tones upon the Turners' gallery, Mrs. Raymond found opportunity to say,—

"Well, I'm thankful *I* never said a word against her."

"And so am I,—devoutly," echoed Mrs. Turner.

Of course Lady Pelham could see no possible way of escape for Truscott. His conduct and Mrs. Tanner's indiscretion were past all explanation in her severely virtuous mind, but it was disconcerting to observe that "the best people in the garrison" were exhibiting decided change of heart and correspondingly avoiding her, "As if *I* were the one to blame," said her ladyship.

In selecting the pall-bearers Colonel Pelham asked nobody's advice. Madame had attempted some questioning, but was warned by the knitting of his brow and an impatient gesture that he desired none of her interference. Handing the list to Major Bucketts, the colonel briefly told him to notify the gentlemen there named and to detail Captain Canker and his troop for the escort. There was fitness in that selection, as Mr. Ray observed, for the captain was already in half-mourning, but Truscott's name was not on the list of pall-bearers, and thereat Mr. Ray saw fit to wax indignant. He had no idea of policy, and, finding that he had been named as one of them, proceeded straight to the colonel's office, and for the first time since his return from scout exhibited himself to his commander.

"Colonel, I was the last officer of the regiment to see Captain Tanner alive, and during this late scout I had more than one confidential talk with him. Will you permit me to say that the omission of Mr. Truscott's name from the list of pall-bearers would be the last thing Captain Tanner would wish could he express a wish?"

The colonel liked Ray,—liked him better than ever

since his adventure with Grace, and, as some of the captains growlingly remarked, "‘Old Catnip’ would put up with anything in Ray’s troop and wouldn’t stand a rusty buckle in anybody else’s." It was not strictly accurate, but as an expression of the prevailing opinion was not greatly overdrawn. Very probably he would have severely snubbed any other officer, and even to Ray he spoke sternly.

"Mr. Truscott is in arrest, sir."

"I know it, colonel; but you surely do not mean to prohibit his attending the funeral of his old captain and oldest friend."

It was just what Pelham had intended doing. That is to say, he meant to grant no extension of limits or suspension from arrest unless Truscott asked it; but the hour was drawing nigh, Truscott had not asked, and the old gentleman was getting vastly afraid that he would not.

"Mr. Truscott has refused to vindicate his reputation, sir, and I do not think that in this matter he can expect much consideration," said the colonel, trying to feel that what he said was just.

"It is more for the consideration due to Captain Tanner and to the regiment, colonel, that I am appealing," said Ray, boldly. "Mr. Truscott would prohibit my appealing for him."

"The regiment, sir, is inclined to the belief that if Mr. Truscott had been as careful of the honor of Captain Tanner during his life as he desires to be of the honors due him after death, he would stand higher than he does this day."

Instantly he realized that he had said too much, and

would have been glad to recall it. Ray flushed crimson with indignation.

"I beg your pardon, Colonel Pelham. You will find that the *men* of the regiment do not agree with you," he said, hotly.

"You are forgetting yourself, Mr. Ray," said the colonel. "Leave the office, sir!" And, gritting his teeth and looking very red in the face, Mr. Ray did as he was bid.

Nevertheless, in half an hour the colonel sent Major Bucketts to say to Mr. Truscott that his arrest would be suspended until retreat, in order that he might have an opportunity of attending the obsequies of his late captain.

And so it happened later that bright wintry day that the guards at the large empty ward of the post-hospital respectfully stood aside and opened the door to the tall young officer who silently entered. The two hospital attendants sitting near a low table in the middle of the room rose and drew back, one of them reverently raising the fold of the flag draped over the head of the cloth-covered coffin, and Jack Truscott stood gazing down into the calm, pallid features of his friend.

Oh, what memories came surging up before him as he hung over the casket! More than eight years before, when fresh from West Point, he had reported for duty with Tanner's company, and, joining him in Kansas, had served with him through more than one eventful campaign against the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arrapahoes; had found his captain always thoughtful, courteous, and considerate; had learned to trust him

implicitly, and little by little to look up to and love him. Together they had "roughed it" over the prairies and "messed" in garrison; together they had gone East the second year of Jack's service with the company, and he had appeared as best man at the quiet little ceremony which made his captain the happiest fellow on earth. And there he had met in the person of his bridesmaid the sister of the sweet woman of whom Tanner had so often talked to him on their long rides, and, in a beauty more radiant, a wit more sparkling, a vivacity more attractive, Jack Truscott had been able to believe he saw all the nobler attributes which existed in the gentle bride his comrade had won. In another year a courtship, conducted mainly by correspondence, had resulted in his engagement to be married to the younger sister of his captain's wife, and yet he marvelled that she should desire that it be not yet announced, and had marvelled more that as day after day his relations with Tanner and his wife grew more cordial and intimate, Mrs. Tanner could never seem perfectly unembarrassed or confidently happy about that engagement.

Then her baby had been born, and he had been devoted to little Bertie. Could he ever forget Tanner's choking voice and tear-dimmed eyes when he got back and tried to thank him for nursing the little one through that terrible illness? And then when, after all, they lost the child, how well he recalled her agony and his deep, manfully-subdued grief! How he recalled the long winter evenings in that bleak frontier fort when she with her sewing, he and Tanner with their books or papers, sat by the hour together, sometimes hardly

speaking at all ! And how they had gone, Mrs. Tanner and he, to plant the flowers around the little grave down by the stream ; and then how, despite her grief, she seemed to watch him all that winter and the spring that followed, until he went away to assume the duties of the adjutancy. And how oddly, unusually earnest and affectionate and solicitous Tanner's behavior to him had become, and his letters after he went away. He used to wonder at it then ; but his letters from the East, from his *fiancée*, had been growing less frequent, more hurried, more unsatisfactory for a year, and when he took his leave of absence and went on to satisfy himself as to whether all was really as it should be, the truth came out. The wealth and position of a prominent merchant, a widower with three or four children, had been too much for her brief infatuation for a distant subaltern in the cavalry, and, like a sensible girl, she embraced her opportunity—and the widower ; and Jack came back to the —th by no means the heart-broken man he ought to have been. It was Mrs. Tanner who felt it most. She never forgave her sister, and, in her gentle, womanly way, she redoubled her thoughtfulness for Jack, and more than ever had they welcomed him to their cosy quarters. But then came the move to Arizona,—a temporary separation. And when he again met his old comrades, he marked with dismay her pallid cheek, and learned in a few broken words from Tanner that what they feared in Kansas was now an undisputed fact. Heart disease in a dangerous form had fastened upon her, and great care, said the physicians who were consulted, had to be exercised. She knew it all as well as they, but was ever bright,

brave, and cheery, and no one but Tanner, Truscott, and the doctors ever suspected or at least knew the truth. Stronger and firmer had grown the ties which bound Tanner and himself together, but neither was demonstrative. No one but Mrs. Tanner ever dreamed how much they were to each other.

And now—and now the loving, devoted husband, the indulgent father, the dutiful soldier, the faithful friend lay here cold,—dead to his grief and desolation; and she, the sweet, pure, gentle wife, mother, and friend, lay at death's door, robbed of her husband who was all in all to her; robbed of her friend who would have given his right hand to aid her; robbed of her good name by the infamous twaddle of garrison gossips; and he—he who had so revered and honored and loved them both, stood accused, even by the commander whom he had served so faithfully and well, of having dishonored the holiest friendship he had ever known. More than that. His colonel's daughter, to whom he had given the strength and fervor of a man's deep love, was cited as a witness against him. Oh, bitter, bitter were his thoughts, but presently he had to thrust them away. It was almost time for the formation of the escort, and he must take leave of the first and firmest friend he had found in all his army life. Jack bent and tenderly brushed aside the dark hair from the cold white forehead, and then kneeling, pressed his lips upon the placid face, and hot tears rolled down his cheeks. Even as he knelt there, with one arm thrown over the coffin, alone in his bereavement, the door again softly opened and two persons entered. He heard them not,

and never moved. But they saw him, and stopped : a fragile, graceful girl clinging to the arm of a stout, rugged old soldier. She bore in her hand a little wreath of wild-flowers, simple and homely enough, but the best that hours of search could discover in that remote region. She had come to place them upon the bier of the gallant troop-commander her father so honored ; but at sight of Truscott she held back, and father and daughter stood motionless an instant regarding him. The attendant stepped forward to offer a chair, and at the sound of his footfall Truscott raised his head and saw them. One second of indecision followed. Then, with one lingering look in the face of the dead, without another glance at Grace or the colonel, he slowly walked away.

An hour after, to the wailing notes of the band, the solemn *cortege* formed around the new-made grave among the foot-hills west of the post. There stood Canker's company, dismounted, and in full-dress uniform, the escort of the soldier-dead ; there stood the gray-haired chaplain, whose tremulous voice rose and fell in mournful cadence on the still evening air ; there, leaning on their sabres, were grouped the officers of the garrison, the general commanding and his aides, all with reverently uncovered head, many with tear-dimmed eyes ; there stood a mourning, weeping group of ladies, the wives of brother officers, and among them many a heart faltered in the dread that any day it might be their lot to stand there and see that same flag lifted from the form of him who was all in all, as this had been all in all to her who lay sore-stricken in the desolation of her home. All around were grouped

the soldiers of the post, for loved and honored he had been among them. And there, near the foot of the grave, stood Truscott, holding weeping little Rosalie in his arms. She would go to no one, walk with no one but Uncle Jack, and until he came and took her to his strong, heaving breast and buried her bright curls on his broad shoulder, the lonely little girl had cried piteously for him. And now they stood there clasped in each other's embrace, while all that was mortal of the gallant officer and gentleman was lowered to the grave, and the solemn tones of the old chaplain gave thanks "for the good example of all those Thy servants who, having finished their course in faith, do now rest from their labors." The heavy clods had fallen, the last prayer and blessing had been spoken, the grace of Him who suffered and died once more invoked, and then the sombre throng fell back from the grave, the bright-plumed helmets of the escort ranged up in line, the muffled word of command was given, the carbines flashed their parting volleys over the clay their ringing clamor could no longer thrill, the notes of the trumpets floated away with the smoke of the discharge, "Taps," the soldiers' signal for "extinguish lights" the world over, died away in distant echoes across the valley, and all was over. Ay, put out your light, old fellow, gallant comrade, trusted friend. Rest in peace, and may God grant you a joyous waking at the great reveille! But now, *allons!* *Le roi est mort, vive* the next man! Lieutenant Stafford becomes captain *vice* the deceased. It's an ill wind that blows nobody good. Our turn may come next. Who knows? It's all in the business. Soldiers cannot stop to mourn. Life is too

short, anyway. So strike up your liveliest music, trumpeters. "Fours right," gentlemen of the escort. "Left front into line, double-time," go the platoons as they clear the enclosure, and the band bursts into the ringing, lively, rollicking quickstep from *La Fille de Madame Angot*, and with elastic steps we march away from the grave where our hero lies buried.

And now, gentlemen, to business! First and foremost this matter of Truscott's has to be settled. The general has heard all about it, of course, and has not a word to say. It is a regimental matter entirely, and if the colonel should consider it necessary to forward charges against Mr. Truscott for his assault on the *pro tempore* commanding officer, why, Mr. Truscott must be tried by court-martial. All the same, the chief has received Tanner's last official report, in which the conduct of Truscott and Ray has been highly praised, and he sends for both those gentlemen and shakes them warmly by the hand and congratulates them heartily. He says very little, talking is not his forte, but white and Indian well know that what he says he means, and the wariest redskin will take his faintest promise in preference to any agreement stamped with the great seal of the Indian bureau. To Truscott and Ray he says not a word concerning the former's arrest; he is totally oblivious to Canker's black eye, and is scrupulously courteous to that officer when he meets him; he listens patiently to Colonel Pelham's recital of the affair, because Pelham thinks he must allude to it, but he expresses no opinion whatever and has no suggestions to make. He calls laboriously on every lady in the gar-

risson accompanied by Mr. Bright, and condoles with each in appropriate terms upon the great loss the regiment has sustained, but he generally manages to let them do all the talking, a matter that requires but little ingenuity to be sure, and to limit his call to four or five minutes; but at Mrs. Tanner's he leaves his card and many a warm inquiry, and directs Dr. Harper to remain there "until he has pulled her through," and he holds little Rosalie in his arms and presses his bearded, kindly face against hers, and something suspiciously like moisture stands thick in his eyes as he comes away. Then, refusing all escort, he starts back for Prescott; but meantime Colonel Wickham has had a plain talk with Pelham, likewise with Canker, and the latter, who has used up some quires of legal cap in his concoction of charges against Truscott, thinks it advisable at least to revise and condense; and immediately after dinner that evening Mr. Ray accompanies Truscott and Bucketts to the ex-adjutant's quarters.

The mess has not been a particularly convivial place of late, and since Mr. Ray's return the conversation has been more highly spiced with pepper than the viands. Truscott, the two doctors, and Bucketts have been very grave and silent, but Ray has kept the ball of conversation rolling in a way that at another time would have afforded immense entertainment to the elders. It is observed that unless spoken to by them he never addresses or notices Hunter or Glenham. Crane he cut long ago, and his demeanor to every officer whom he fancies in the most remote manner to have had anything to do with the stories at Truscott's ex

pense is in the last degree suggestive of "Won't you have the goodness to knock this chip off my shoulder, or even ever so lightly tread on the tail of my coat?" Captain Canker he encountered in front of his quarters the very evening of his return, and something in his expression caused the captain to reflect and to restrain his impulse to hold forth his hand. It was a fortunate inspiration, for, looking him straight in the face, Mr. Ray passed him by without any recognition whatever, and Canker, who really liked the young fellow greatly, was stung to the quick.

And now the day before Christmas had come, and after the routine business of the office had been transacted, Major Bucketts, who still occupied the adjutant's chair, inquired of the colonel at what time it would be convenient to him to see the doctor and himself on matters connected with the allegations against Mr. Truscott, and the colonel eagerly answered the sooner the better. In a short time, therefore, Dr. Clayton arrived, accompanied by Captain Turner, who had a small packet of papers in his hand. All being seated and the doors closed, the colonel inquired,—

"Well, gentlemen, what have you to say?" And the doctor became the spokesman.

"Colonel Pelham, as Mrs. Tanner is recovering and will soon be in a condition to enable her to attend to her husband's affairs, it becomes necessary that Mr. Truscott should be able to assist her. Captain Turner has here written directions of Captain Tanner's that, in the event of his sudden death, Mr. Truscott should take charge of his papers, etc., as he was acquainted with all the details of his business affairs. His will is

very brief, he indicates, and leaves everything unreservedly to his widow and children, but there is much business to be attended to that both he and she have been in the habit of intrusting to Mr. Truscott when the captain had to be absent. Were Mr. Truscott not able to attend to these matters for her she would certainly expect to know why, and on her account at least, and to put an end to a scandalous story, we are here to-day.

“You and Captain Canker saw Mr. Truscott issuing from Mrs. Tanner’s house towards one o’clock in the morning the night of the 14th–15th, and believed it to have been—or rather attached an improper motive to his being there. Whether you are aware of the fact or not, Mr. Truscott has for eight years past been the most trusted and intimate friend the Tanners had, and these relations existed long before you joined the regiment as its colonel. Captain Tanner was ordered off on this last scout at a most inopportune time. He left the post just at the day and hour when five years before he had lost his first-born child in Kansas. It was very hard for him, it was desperately hard for her, and in the thought of her suffering it seems he forgot some important items of business. Two days out he wrote an urgent message to Truscott to have copies made of certain papers and get them off to his attorney’s in San Francisco as quick as possible. The letter reached Truscott after taps on the night of the 14th, the mail was to leave for Prescott the morning of the 15th. No time was to be lost. He went right to Tanner’s quarters, as he had done dozens of times before, got the papers, and by dint of two hours’ hard work had more

than half finished the copies when your voice and Canker's and the mention of his name attracted him. He went out at once, was sent on this message after the command, and Mrs. Tanner finished the copying and got the papers off. If Truscott was guilty for being there at one o'clock, I'm guiltier, for I was there at two. I saw her light in there as I was coming back from the hospital, where I had been called to see a sick man, and, fearing she was ill again, I went in at once, and she was just putting into envelopes the result of her work and his. There are the receipts for the registered package in which they went. Here is Captain Tanner's letter requesting Truscott to attend to this work for him," and he held forth the sheet.

Pelham took it. Drops of sweat were standing on his brow. He drew his hand across his eyes, but the hand that held the paper trembled so that he could not read. He flattened the paper out upon his desk and tried again, and the words danced before his eyes. Yet he saw enough to convince—he had heard more than enough to convince him, and the lump that rose in his throat wellnigh choked him.

"Should you need further proof I will send for Mr. Ray, for Tanner told him infinitely more than I have told you, sir. If not, we will go to the next point, of the actual allegations against Mr. Truscott. An officer reports having seen him take Mrs. Tanner in his arms out on the bluff just at first call for tattoo the night the command marched away. The officer says he only had a hasty glance, as his companion at once led him away. The story is true. Mr. Truscott did take her in his arms. If he hadn't, she'd have fallen down the

hill-side. He carried her home in his arms, and but for him she wouldn't have got there. She was in a dead faint when I reached her just as tattoo was sounding. She had begged him to come for her and take her out there to see the last of them as they forded the stream below the post, and just as they were heard entering the ford the first call for tattoo sounded, and just five years before at the same call her baby had been taken from her as now her husband is taken and——”

“Doctor, if you knew all this before, why, in God's name, did you let me wrong this little woman by implication even? You could have stopped it all. *Half* what you have told me here would have held my hand.” And poor Pelham had sprung to his feet, and absolutely wringing his hands, was tramping up and down the floor.

“I did not even know that any one entertained such unjust suspicions until you had placed the matter in Captain Canker's hands; but there is another matter,—Mrs. Treadwell's letter.”

“Not a word more. I want no explanation. I want nothing further. Why has Truscott suppressed this? Why has he allowed me to suspect her, if he cared nothing for himself? Turner, *you* know Truscott, how do you account for it?” And absolute misery was stamped on the flushed and honest face of the old soldier as he asked.

“Colonel, I hate to answer that, but you ask me and shall have an answer. Truscott had every right to expect you to use no middle-man in such a matter, but to bring the whole thing yourself to his notice. In

refusing to say a word after you had permitted Canker to demand his resignation, he did just what I would have done, or any man of spirit. Indeed, it is only on her account that he permits the explanation to be made now."

Then followed a long and earnest consultation, and at lunch-time, the officers gathering in the mess-room looked significantly at one another as Turner, Bucketts, and the doctor walked away, and Captain Canker was seen approaching the colonel's office. That evening before retreat it had leaked out among the ladies, and was told around the garrison, that Mr. Truscott had been informed that if he would apologize to Captain Canker in the presence of his commanding officer and certain others the charges now pending against him would be withdrawn, and that Mr. Truscott had flatly refused to do anything of the kind.

Certain it is that there was some unexplained cheering and commotion among the men as they broke ranks after stables, and that the men in Mr. Ray's troop were seen vehemently shaking hands with those in Tanner's old command.

Truscott did not come to dinner, and in his absence there was no restraint on the tongues. Mr. Ray had the floor, and Mr. Ray had evidently been drinking more than was prudent, but he was lively as a cricket and all ablaze with enthusiasm.

"Apology be d—d! Of course he wouldn't apologize. What's Jack got to apologize for, I'd like to know? Because he put a head on a sneaking cur who insulted him outrageously and the sweetest woman in the regiment at the same time, God bless her! as He

hasn't particularly, but ought to all the same. Of course he wouldn't apologize, and that man Canker's a bigger ignoramus than I supposed to expect such a thing. Why, d—n it, there's no such thing as an apology for a blow. Any babe in arms knows that in Kentucky, or any place where people live like Christians. You can't apologize unless you *retract*. You can retract an affront, you can take back abuse, you can swallow your own words, if you're in the wrong, but all the saints in heaven can't take back a blow. There's nothing for that but fight, if the other man has any fight left in him, and may the Lord forgive me if I ever thought to hear any other doctrine preached in a cavalry regiment!"

And thus expounded this verbose and excitable young disciple of the code to his hearers, and carried conviction with him.

"No, gentlemen," he continued, "if Captain Canker wants satisfaction he can get it, and lots of it, and it's his business or his friends to attend to that speedily if they propose attending to it at all; but if they don't want any more fight, if they're perfectly satisfied with getting squarely knocked out of time, why, we are: but don't talk apology to Truscott unless somebody else wants to get floored. Mark my words, if Captain Canker has any decency left in him he'll apologize on his own account, and I know two or three other gentlemen that would vastly improve their own status by apologizing themselves."

Whereat Messrs. Hunter and Glenham looked very red and uneasy, but spoke not.

A wretched Christmas it was to everybody when it

came around, bright, clear, and sparkling. The men had their elaborate dinner, except in Tanner's troop, where, by vote of their own, the soldiers decided to have no festivity whatever, but they went in a body to the grave and decorated it with fresh pine-boughs and such rude ornaments as they could prepare. Colonel and Mrs. Pelham had intended giving a dinner to the bachelor officers of the garrison, some of them at least, but her ladyship gave out some days beforehand, and, if she had not, the battle royal which took place 'twixt her and her liege lord Christmas-eve would have incapacitated one or both for any enjoyment of the festival. There is no use in picturing that affair. It occurred after his interview with his officers and the complete establishment in his mind of Truscott's innocence, and, of course, of Mrs. Tanner's. Grace, fortunately, heard nothing of it. She had gone in to inquire after Mrs. Tanner, whom she found was sleeping quite naturally, and Mrs. Wilkins stole down-stairs and begged her to stay a while. And they, a strangely-assorted pair, had a long talk which was the stepping-stone to a better understanding between them, for Mrs. Wilkins was "coming out" in a light totally unexpected. But when Grace returned home she found that her mother had retired to her own room and was suffering from one of her wretched headaches, and during the entire day which followed madame saw fit not to emerge.

Glenham of course came in to spend Christmas-eve, and was manifestly ill at ease. So also came one or two of the younger ladies, and as a consequence it was not very long before the subject of Mr. Truscott's arrest

was alluded to. The colonel had shut himself up in his den, and the coast was clear, thought these searchers after information. It was the current belief that Grace was so completely in her father's confidence that he had no hesitation in telling her all about the affairs of the garrison. "It must be delicious," said Miss Blanche, "to know just exactly all about these fellows." And finding in the few conversations she had enjoyed with Grace that that young lady was by no means confidential, she hit on the bold stroke of broaching the subject publicly, for Miss Pelham would hardly "snub" her under such circumstances.

"Isn't it dreadful to think of Mr. Truscott's being arrested just at this time?" she said, looking pointedly at Grace, yet addressing the remark to nobody in particular.

Finding that she was expected to reply, Miss Pelham calmly answered that it certainly was, and instantly changed the subject; but the other damsel was not to be rebuffed; she returned to the charge.

"Do you know, I think it's just splendid in him not to apologize. Of course I don't know what Captain Canker *could* have said to make him so angry." (Which was remarkable, considering the amount of information imparted in her letter to her friend at Prescott.) "Now they'll *have* to court-martial him, won't they? You know (appealingly) I haven't the faintest idea how such things are governed in the army."

Grace colored vividly.

"It is a matter that I really know nothing about," she replied, with grave courtesy. And Glenham, who had been nervously tossing over some music on the

piano, came forward and begged her to sing. Whereat everybody else said, "Oh, *do!*" And as a means of putting an end to all such questioning she acceded, singing soft, low, sad music, and pleading inability to attempt the livelier and more difficult selections they would have been glad to extort from her. But when all were gone, she stole to her father's lonely den, finding him drearily pretending to read. Worn and harassed he certainly looked; and she twined her arm around his neck and kissed him tenderly.

"What is it, papa?" she asked, relapsing into the pet name of her girlhood. "You look so worried. Is it anything you can tell me?"

He looked lovingly into her sweet, serious face. Then bowed his head.

"My darling, I fear that I have made a fearful mistake, and I know that I've done a grave injustice to one of my best officers."

She knew well who was meant, but—wanted to be told.

"Who, father?"

"Mr. Truscott."

There was a moment's silence, and her heart was beating wildly.

"This affair with—with Captain Canker, do you mean?" she asked.

"Something far more serious. I cannot tell you, dear. But he is utterly and entirely innocent; more than that, he is even a truer and nobler friend and gentleman than even I supposed, and I had been led to deeply wrong him."

Poor Grace! In bitter distress she crept to her

room that night. Only on two occasions had she seen Truscott since his return from the scout. Once mingling his tears with little Rosalie, once kneeling by the lifeless form of his old friend and comrade. On the first occasion he did not see, on the second he would not see her. And she, despite the jealous doubts that had possessed her, despite her now detested engagement to Arthur Glenham, would have given worlds to recall her action and implore his forgiveness. But what could she do?

And now her father had virtually told her that all the accusations brought by Mrs. Pelham against Truscott were utterly unfounded. Even what she saw must have had some explanation, and she had not a friend to whom she could turn and seek the truth. She knew only too well now that it was useless to look to her mother for that. There was no merry Christmas this year for poor Grace. It is not worth while to picture her perplexity and distress, but that night she looked with far from friendly eyes at the class-ring Mr. Glenham had begged her to wear in acknowledgment of their engagement until the beautiful pledge he had ordered from San Francisco should arrive. Glenham was inordinately proud of that ring. With all its martial devices and heavy setting, he had selected an unusually beautiful and expensive stone on which to have engraved the motto of his class, and West Point had seen nothing handsomer in that line for years, and young women who were fond of appearing in public with the class-rings of their graduating admirers disported upon their fingers had made no little effort towards inducing Mr. Glenham to proffer his, but all

to no purpose. Feminine fingers had never been encircled by it one instant until he proudly, humbly, joyously placed it upon hers, where it needed a guard-ring to keep it from slipping off; and this night she gazed upon its splendor with absolute aversion, then tore it from her finger and hid it from her sight.

CHAPTER XXI.

THREE days more, and an odd change had come over the spirit of Camp Sandy's dreams. In the first place, all the ladies in the garrison had been to call at Mrs. Tanner's, if only to leave their cards with "kind inquiries." Even Mrs. Pelham had to go: the colonel made her. In the second place, despite the fact that "he would *not* apologize," Mr. Truscott was released from arrest, for Captain Canker had preferred no charges. One after another the officers whom he consulted told him that he really deserved to be knocked down for his language and manner to Truscott, and as he realized what a passion he had been in, and began to realize what he had said, and found out that after all he had been hideously unjust in his suspicions, and that he had lost the friendship of every man in the regiment whose friendship was worth having (even the colonel having intimated that no one but he could have been so preternaturally awkward and outrageous in his language), poor Canker found himself deserted and forlorn. At first he raged at his colonel. It was all Pelham's fault, he said. Pelham had made him pull his chestnuts out of the fire, and now his hands were not only scarred for life, but the colonel had "gone back on him." Unfortunately for Canker's peace of mind, nobody would agree with him. Everybody knew

that he had been directed through the acting adjutant to say not a word further to Truscott "until Tanner's return," and everybody knew that it did not mean "dead or alive" in Tanner's case. A great revulsion of feeling had set in as the news of the doctor's revelation to the colonel, which was not so much of a revelation anyhow, was circulated. Even the men who would have, possibly *had*, urged Canker to his most unfortunate step, now found it expedient to forget that they ever thought Truscott anything but the most perfect gentleman in the regiment, and Canker, being left without friends, true to human nature they who had started him down-hill lent occasional kicks to keep him going. With public sentiment dead against him, with the certainty that he would be awfully scorched should the case ever come to trial, Captain Canker notified the colonel that under all the circumstances he had decided to prefer no charges, and immediately applied for leave of absence, went up to Prescott, whence he speedily telegraphed to Mrs. Canker to have everything packed up at once and turned over to the quartermaster, the general having assured him that he should have six-months' leave. To the infinite disgust of Mr. Ray, Captain Canker left the Territory without either an apology or a fight.

Three days after Christmas, Major Bucketts notified Mr. Truscott that he was released from arrest, and that the colonel desired to see him. In the interview that ensued, Pelham, in deep embarrassment and with many a painful stumble, strove to explain to his silent junior how he had been torn and twisted and warped in his judgment, and had allowed himself to be utterly mis-

led. He strove to do this without in any way mentioning his wife's connection with the matter, but it was useless. Truscott sat a patient but utterly impassive listener. He could forgive where the wrong had involved only him, but he was thinking of her. He could not aid the colonel by the suggestion of a single word, and at last the old gentleman in desperation rose and clasped his head in his hands.

"Truscott, try and forget this for old times' sake, for what you know I was before this—these women drove me out of my wits." And the two had shaken hands, but the colonel saw plainly that there was no such thing as bridging the gulf that stood between them. Truscott was perfectly gentle and courteous, full of respect, and evidently strove after that outburst to be cordial to his old friend and commander, but the colonel plainly saw the effort, plainly saw that Truscott had aged greatly in the brief month that had passed, and that the old faith and confidence was gone.

But he had still what he conceived another duty to perform. "Your resignation was tendered under a grievous misapprehension, and was accepted under another. I want you to return to your position at once, and would like to issue the order before to-morrow morning."

And Truscott slowly and gravely replied,—

"Colonel, it is impossible. I cannot do it."

"You will force me to believe that you cannot or will not accept the only amend in my power to offer," said the colonel.

And Truscott strove to satisfy him.

"Do not think that, colonel. Believe me that I fully

appreciate the confidence you show in me and the thorough amends you have made, but before this interview I had committed myself to another arrangement and accepted another detail."

"Is it one that cannot be recalled, Truscott?" the colonel asked, gravely.

"It might be, sir," said Jack, coloring painfully; "but I beg you not to press for further reasons. It is best in every way that I should not serve upon your staff." And Pelham saw that the matter was settled once and for all, and at reveille on the following morning Lieutenant Truscott took command of Company "C," vacated by the death of Captain Tanner.

Of that interview with his colonel Truscott never spoke until long afterwards. How, then, did it happen that it was soon known throughout the Department of Arizona that in releasing him from arrest the colonel had again tendered the adjutancy to him? Their conversation took place in the office. Major Bucketts had withdrawn, the sergeant-major and the clerks were at supper, not a soul was present other than the two officers, and the colonel would hardly be apt, as colonels go, to announce that a position on his staff had been declined.

But the adjutancy had to be filled. Major Bucketts could not do it; he was too stiff, old, and clumsy, as he very frankly said, to fill such a position. Six of the thirteen first lieutenants of the regiment were on staff or detached duty in the East, and Pelham swore that only men who served with the regiment in the field should hold its positions of honor under him. Crane and Wilkins were utterly unsuitable. There were very valid objections to two other first lieutenants serving in

the southern part of the Territory. Mr. Ray, therefore, was the only one left, unless the colonel went down among the second lieutenants, which, said he on one occasion, is equivalent to saying that none of the first lieutenants are fit for the position. Why would not Ray do? And for two days the captains and officers generally decided that Ray was to be the coming man. He was a splendid little soldier in the field all admitted, and had a great deal of snap and energy in handling his troop on drill, but he despised "paper-work," hated "red tape," could not bear office duty of any kind, and withal was so hot-headed and impetuous that he would be sure to get into snarls with the company commanders in less than no time. Then he was utterly devil-may-care and reckless as to what people might think of his doings and sayings. He *would* drink when he felt like it, and did gamble, not infrequently to the neglect of his garrison duties. He could not write a letter without the aid of a dictionary, and shunned correspondence of any kind as scrupulously as he did the catechism, but for all this, in spite of all this, the colonel liked him well. He was as true as steel, faithful in friendship, loyal in his likes and dislikes, and an out-and-out cavalryman. "A man," as the colonel had very truly said, "of whom the regiment is proud." And just so soon as he had satisfied himself that Truscott would not return to his old position he turned to Ray, and Ray very respectfully but positively declined it.

This was a facer. "Has it come to this, by thunder!" said the colonel to himself, "that my officers absolutely refuse to serve on my staff?"

"You doubtless have your reasons, Mr. Ray," said the colonel, "and you must be aware that an offer of the adjutancy of a regiment like this is not a thing to be treated lightly. I think that I am entitled to hear your reasons, sir."

Ray hesitated and looked perturbed. He had a way of throwing his head back and wagging it more or less when he had anything to say that was disagreeable to him, or was difficult to frame in diplomatic speech. After a moment's demur the head went back and the answer came, and he looked straight in the colonel's eye.

"It's just this, Colonel Pelham, I'm too careless to fill the position; I've no head for that sort of work. I can't tend to letters and such—and—well, sir, I drink too much anyhow."

"Admitting all that, Ray," said the colonel, very kindly, "and mind you I do not admit all of it, if I choose to take the responsibility and, despite your frank statement of what you consider your disqualifications, see fit to renew the offer, I think it your place to accept—unless you have grave additional reasons."

"Well, then, colonel, I *have*."

"And they are what?"

Again Ray hesitated.

"It is my right to know, I think," said Pelham.

"Very well, sir." And now the head was wagging in earnest. "In my opinion an adjutant should be an officer whom his colonel could trust before all others in his regiment. He has got to be thrown into constant intercourse with the colonel's family and should be on cordial terms with them; and—and if such a gentle-

man as Mr. Truscott could not be satisfactory to Mrs. Pelham, why, the Lord knows I couldn't."

And Colonel Pelham, reddening painfully, pressed for no further reason. He was indignant at Mr. Ray for assigning such a cause, yet he knew well down in the depths of his heart that but for that very cause Jack Truscott would not be as he was—estranged. Ray was permitted to withdraw, and the colonel, with gloomy brow, went home to lunch. Grace was absent; had gone over to Mrs. Tanner's again, said her ladyship; and she wished that Grace would keep away from there, she was getting altogether too intimate with that horrid Mrs. Wilkins; then again, said madame, she always manages to be there now, "playing with Rosalie," she says, when Mr. Glenham comes here to see her, and plainly he does not like it.

"If he doesn't like it, Mrs. Pelham, let him leave it," said the colonel, very bluntly. "She cannot do too much now to undo the mischief you have played where Mrs. Tanner and—others are concerned. And as for this engagement to Mr. Glenham, I'm not half satisfied that it isn't a source of distress instead of joy to her. She's been looking worse and worse every day."

This was altogether too delicious a conversation for Maggie the housemaid to leave unheard. Well she knew that presently her ladyship would lose her temper entirely, and then there would be revelations; so on one pretext or another she kept bustling in and out of the lunch-room, and sure enough the explosion came.

"Know it!" the colonel was wrathfully saying. "Know it! by the eternal, madame, how can I help know it when the two best officers in my regiment

decline the adjutancy, and one of them plainly tells me that your infernal behavior is the reason?"

"Leave the room, Maggie!" her ladyship had shrieked before bursting into the flood of weeping and lamentation to be expected after such an accusation; and Maggie left, and took with her the story, "infernal" and all, to Bridget next door, who duly transmitted it along the row, so that by dinner-time it was coming back along the piazzas and parlors. Oh, those were joyous days at Sandy!

Since their return, neither Truscott nor Ray had called at the colonel's. One, because of his arrest, itself an all-sufficient reason, though he had others quite as cogent. The other, out of sheer disgust at the thought of his dinner there. He had not even paid the conventional dinner-call, and on the few occasions when he met Miss Pelham she was with Mr. Glenham or some lady friends, and he had confined his remarks to a few awkward platitudes. He had never once congratulated her on her engagement, and to Truscott he made no allusion to it whatever, yet time and again it was in his thoughts, and so was that blood-stained handkerchief he had taken from Truscott's breast. How came it there? thought Ray, and what did that portend? It was a new perplexity, and not a particularly pleasant one.

And now Glenham and Hunter had been to see Truscott, and presumably had "explained." Certainly they had apologized for anything they might have said or done to wound him in the least, for they openly announced the fact at the mess, as though for Ray's information. Truscott was very civil to both, and there

was a faint resumption of his old kindly manner to Glenham, but *very* faint, and he did not invite him to return to his roof. The holidays were gloomy in the last degree. Mirth and music and theatricals and fun went on at Prescott, and thither went the young lady visitors when Captain Canker's ambulance drove up with him, but the general's wife, who had invited Grace to spend the holidays with her, or at least expressed a wish that she should do so when they parted, was dumb thereafter. She had absolutely made no reply to the rather gushing note in which Lady Pelham had announced her precious daughter's engagement to Mr. Glenham, but she had written to Jack Truscott, for Glenham saw the letter when the mail was opened, and very dutifully told her ladyship thereof.

And now Mrs. Tanner was beginning to sit up a few hours each day, and Dr. Harper had gone back to his duties at Fort Whipple. Both he and his able coadjutor at Sandy had been unremitting in their attention, and Mrs. Wilkins had been simply a wonder. Leaving her own sturdy brood to the care of her weaker half and the maid-of-all-work (who was likewise the cook), this energetic lady spent her days and nights in close attendance on the gentle sufferer, and whether it was from such incessant association with that pure, patient soul, or from remorse at having, if only to a very slight extent, lent herself to the circulation of the story at Mrs. Tanner's expense, certain it is that her rugged and intractable nature was vastly softened and subdued. She would flare up and wax furious or else stony when Mrs. Pelham made her occa-

sional calls to inquire after Mrs. Tanner, and to make sanctimonious or patronizingly sympathetic remarks. Mrs. Wilkins could see no good whatever in Mrs. Pelham, and it is to be feared that those who shared her opinions were in the majority, and very stiff and formal and "it's-all-your-fault-anyhow" was her manner towards that self-satisfied lady when she came. As for Mrs. Pelham, it may be briefly said that, having accomplished her object in seeing Grace plighted to Glenham, she was quite ready to be magnanimous to those whom she had trodden under foot in her struggles to effect that end. She was quite willing to admit, she said, that Mrs. Treadwell was totally mistaken, and that "we had all been too censorious" where Mrs. Tanner was concerned. Indeed, to the vast indignation of Mesdames Raymond and Turner, these ladies were virtually given to understand that she, Lady Pelham, could never, never have believed such a thing of so sweet and gentle a lady had it not been for their positive statements, and now there wasn't a woman in all the garrison except the two whom she had most injured (Mrs. Tanner and her own daughter are meant, not you, Mrs. Raymond,) who did not hate her and talk accordingly.

Madame, however, had long since convinced herself that, having heard all she had heard, it was her duty as a mother and a Christian woman to come down upon the offenders forthwith, and that because others had made a frightful blunder in their suspicions was no reason why she had in her acts. In making frequent visits at Mrs. Tanner's and sending up consoling messages to that lady she conceived that every amend that

could be expected was being made. Why her husband should therefore continue to treat her with cold civility, why Grace should avoid her, why the whole garrison should hold aloof as though she were afflicted with some moral leprosy, was more than she could fathom. Glenham was her only consolation, and he, poor devil, was constantly at her beck and call. She "Arthured" him from morning till night, but never could Grace be induced to call him aught but Mr. Glenham, and it soon became patent to all beholders that while he but seldom appeared in public with, or was believed to be blessed by the society of Miss Pelham, he was at all hours dancing attendance upon his prospective mother-in-law. Lots of fun they had over it at the mess, where those stiff old prigs, as they were laughingly dubbed by Mr. Ray—Truscott and the doctor—were the only ones who did not take part in the sly witticisms at Glenham's expense,—in his absence, of course, for his position was too seriously unenviable to permit of their chaffing him to his face.

"That old catamaran will disgust him yet, if she hasn't already," burst out Mr. Ray, one evening. "You hear *me*!" he added, in the slang of the day, and Truscott shot his friend a warning glance. He hated to hear any woman's name mentioned in that or any mess-room.

It wanted but two days to New Year's. Truscott had been busily occupied in arranging Tanner's papers, working most of the time at his own quarters, but on two occasions he was in Tanner's library when madame called to make her inquiries; and once, one bright sunshiny afternoon, he had stepped quietly in there, for, as

ne entered the house, he heard Grace Pelham's sweet, low laugh, and a ringing peal from Rosalie. They were playing together in the hall above, while Mrs. Wilkins sat by Mrs. Tanner in the pretty room over the piazza. He could not help wondering how the little one could so soon forget her misery of the week before, and yet he was thankful to hear her joyous laugh; thankful that Grace Pelham was so constantly with her, striving to entertain the lonely little body. As yet he had not seen Mrs. Tanner, but every few hours he could learn how she was progressing, and had managed to get some few humble wild-flowers to send to her bedside, and Mrs. Wilkins brought her love and thanks and inquiries as to his wound. Just how deep, intense, and uncomplaining was the suffering of that silent little woman heaven only knew. As consciousness and the flutter of life came back to her there came with it the blight of a desolation that no human pen could ever picture. She lay for hours speechless, striving patiently to obey the directions of her physicians or the attendants beside her. There was no wailing, no wild raving, no upbraiding, but her pillow was wet with her ceaseless tears. O God! how she would have thanked Him could she only be laid there by the side of the gallant, gentle husband who had made her life one dream of joy and unutterable content! But there was Rosalie. There, too, was the baby, now a boisterous little two-year-old, full of vim, and exacting in the last degree. She strained them to her bosom, and prayed for strength to bear her cross. With such sorrow as hers this crabbed and ill-natured chronicle has naught to do.

Twice had Grace been admitted to see her by this time, and infinitely sweet and tender had her manner been. "Come often," Mrs. Tanner had murmured to her, as she returned the warm pressure of the slender hand that lay lingeringly in hers. "Rosalie is growing so fond of you, and you are such a comfort."

And then, as Grace's eyes began to fill, and an odd tremor to creep about the corner of her mouth, the widow twined her fragile arm about her neck, and drew the pale, wistful face down to hers. Some cynic speaks of the Judas kisses women interchange, but in that caress there was a wealth of earnestness that would have disarmed the criticism of a Sterne. Mrs. Tanner wondered at the warmth of that embrace and kiss; wondered more at the agitation with which Grace suddenly withdrew herself from the clasping arm and hurriedly left the room.

And so it happened that, while Truscott was silently at work on Tanner's old desk that afternoon, he heard Mrs. Wilkins's voice aloft.

"I have to run over home a few minutes, Miss Gracie. Would you mind sitting by Mrs. Tanner till I come back? She'll be glad to have you and Rosalie."

Ten minutes after light footsteps came dancing down the stairs, and patting along the hall towards the library-door. Jack Truscott's heart stood still. There was no time to escape, hardly time to think. The next instant the door flew open, and the woman he loved stood before him. It was their first meeting alone since the day of his avowal nearly three weeks ago, and from that day not one word had passed between them. She was in the room before she caught sight of him, still

seated at the desk. Crimson flashed to the roots of her hair. Then she grew as pale as he.

"I—I beg your pardon," she faltered. "I did not know any one was here. I've only come for a book of Rosalie's."

He bowed calmly, gravely.

'You will not disturb my work in the least,' he answered; and the profound would-be dissembler ruined the copy he was making by drawing thereon a series of pot-hooks that bore no resemblance whatever to his ordinary handwriting. "Disturb his work," indeed! His heart was bounding like a trip-hammer with all the enforced calm on his features.

She stood looking hurriedly along the shelves. Then her hand was extended aloft to reach the book she needed, but fell short full six inches.

"Let me help you," he said, quickly rising and stepping to her side. "Which book is it?"

"The red one,—there;" and her left hand touched with its finger-tips the shelf on which it lay, and in slender, snowy grace stood outlined before his eyes. Where was Glenham's ring?

Silently he handed her the book and resumed his seat, and with murmured thanks she left the room.

"Who was there?" asked Mrs. Tanner. "I thought I heard you speak."

"Mr. Truscott," she replied, and despite every effort the color sprang again to her face, and Mrs. Tanner saw it. Grace instantly bent over Rosalie, and plunged into a highly moral and instructive article descriptive of the time-honored illustration of a luridly-colored lion in the meshes of an exaggerated fish-net, the

mouse swallowed up in the general gorge of color being somewhat indistinguishable.

Presently stable-call sounded, and Mr. Truscott was heard to stow away his papers, close the library-door, and leave the house, and when Dr. Clayton came in soon afterwards, and Mrs. Tanner expressed a wish to see her old friend, if it could be permitted, he readily assented, but went off to caution Truscott that no business was to be talked that evening.

Shortly before sunset, therefore, while Grace and Rosalie were still playing or chatting together in the adjoining room, Mrs. Wilkins ushered Truscott up the stairs, and, bidding him enter, discreetly withdrew to where Grace was seated on the floor, a picture of amaze and embarrassment. She had heard nothing of the arrangement or she would have scurried home long ago, and through the open doorway every word they said was distinctly audible, and she could not but see the sweet, tearful face gazing so gratefully, trustingly up in his, but his back was towards her. She strove to resume her chatter with her eager little friend, but her thoughts wandered uncontrollably.

"It's a blessing you are to that little one, Grace Pelham," said Mrs. Wilkins, "and it's a blessing he is to that poor little woman, hard though it must be for her to see him at first."

For a few moments only broken, sobbing words came from Mrs. Tanner's lips, when any sound came at all, but gradually the tearful accents ceased, and her voice, gentle and patient, was mingled with the calm, deep tones of his. Painful, sorrowing, tender as that first interview must have been to both, there was a sweetness

in the very sorrow. At last she called Rosalie to come and see Uncle Jack, and the child, clinging to Grace's hand, strove to draw her with her.

"Yes, come with her, Grace dear, *do*," said Mrs. Tanner, and Grace had to come and take the hand the invalid held forth. "Jack, I don't know how we would have got along without Miss Gracie. She has been everything to Rosalie, and an infinite comfort to me," she continued, as she drew her down into a chair, and Jack, who had risen and courteously bowed on her entrance, resumed his own seat near the foot of the sofa. It was a strange meeting.

Lying there upon the lounge, the newly-widowed invalid held in hers Grace Pelham's slender hand, and looking bravely up in the pale features of her husband's chosen friend, listened eagerly to his recital of the incidents of the last scout and battles. She insisted on hearing them, and he had no reason to give,—he could not but obey. At last she asked him,—

"But are you not imprudent in resuming duty so soon? Are you sure you are strong enough? I never saw you look so pale and ill, Jack."

"I am doing very well," he answered, smiling gravely.

"And yet I know that this is such a busy time in the office, and with all your adjutant's work I ought not to let you touch these affairs of mine. Surely they can wait——"

She stopped short. Grace Pelham's hand, lying in hers, had given an unmistakable quiver, and, looking at her in surprise, Mrs. Tanner saw a flush of deep embarrassment on her face. Not divining its cause, she

saw, too, that Truscott had reddened, and then the first call sounded for retreat. He rose, and promising to see her on the following day, hurriedly took his leave.

"It's undress parade and publication of orders," said Mrs. Wilkins, gazing out of the window. And, sure enough, the voices of the troop commanders could be heard as they marched out to the general parade and formed the line; the trumpets rang out the sunset call; the window shook to the thunder of the evening gun.

"I've so often lain here and listened to Mr. Truscott reading the orders, every word was so distinct," said Mrs. Tanner. "Let us hear what they are to-night." Whereat Mrs. Wilkins suddenly left the room, and all within was silence. In strained, wondering attention, Mrs. Tanner listened; the hand within hers was trembling violently.

"Why, Grace, that isn't Mr. Truscott's voice. You can't understand a word of it, and yet he said he was on duty. What does it mean?"

And for all answer Grace Pelham burst into a passion of tears, buried her face in the pillow beside that of her friend, and sobbed as though her heart would break. Another moment and both Mrs. Tanner's arms were round her; had drawn her head upon her own gentle bosom; her lips pressed kiss after kiss in silent sympathy upon the sunshiny glory of the beautiful hair,—the womanly heart had read her secret.

No wonder that when Miss Pelham was wanted for dinner that evening Miss Pelham sent back word that she had decided to stay and take tea at Mrs. Tanner's, and Mrs. Pelham had again to explain matters as best

she could to Mr. Arthur Glenham, who went home despondent.

Before Jack Truscott came to see her on the following morning Mrs. Tanner had heard from Mrs. Wilkins's lips every item of the stories and events that had so upset the social serenity of Camp Sandy during the past month. It was no difficult matter to learn the whole story. It had been bottled up in Mrs. Wilkins's brain for days, fermenting, seething, "coming to a head," as it were; and when at last Mrs. Tanner gravely demanded of her a full statement of Truscott's loss of the adjutancy, his arrest, and everything,—for poor Grace could only vaguely hint that there were troubles she could not explain, yet longed to that she might ask her forgiveness,—Mrs. Wilkins's relief was something tragic in its intensity. Once uncorked, the story flew forth with a rush; and the reader probably has seen enough of Mrs. Wilkins to feel assured that Lady Pelham had small mercy shown her. Naturally, however, one's principal alarm may be as to how Mrs. Tanner bore the recital. For her husband and for Truscott she was indignant in no mild degree, but she said very little. For herself, she hardly thought.

"It's my belief," said Mrs. Wilkins, among other things, "that if it hadn't been for the venomous stories of that mother of hers Grace Pelham would no more be engaged to that little milksop of a Glenham than I would. It was Jack Truscott she fancied from the first."

And despite her own bitter desolation, many a waking hour did the quiet little woman give to earnest thought over the whole matter. It was more than a revelation, it gave her something to plan and act upon.

It was after drill when Mr. Truscott came in on the following morning. Almost the first thing she did was to give him the key of a tin despatch-box belonging to the captain. "My letters to him are in that," she briefly explained, "and I want the package marked 'From Fort Phoenix.'" To him she made no allusion to his changed fortunes or to the story she had heard. She was frank, gentle, unembarrassed; but he noted a pink flush in the centre of each cheek, which alarmed him, and the doctor once more forbade business talks. "What wouldn't he have said did he know of all I'd told her?" thought Mrs. Wilkins, though she excused herself by the reflection that had she *not* related the whole affair Mrs. Tanner would have worried her life out trying to fathom it. And perhaps she would. Who knows? Truscott soon returned to the desk, and announced at luncheon-time that all the work was finished, her signature to certain papers being all that was needed. Then he left the house.

That afternoon Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Turner came together and begged to be allowed to come upstairs and sit with Mrs. Tanner a while. Mrs. Tanner begged to be excused. "Do you suppose that woman can have told her anything?" asked one of the other.

"She would tell anything she knew," was the reply of Mrs. Turner, who never was known to keep a secret in her life, and yet in her own mind was set upon a very pinnacle of discretion.

Later came Grace Pelham, whom Rosalie eagerly ran to welcome, calling her "Aunt Gracie," as she had in some mysterious way learned to speak of her sweet

friend, and when her voice was heard in the hall below, Mrs. Tanner asked that she be invited up at once.

She had been riding with Mr. Glenham, and it would seem as though, of late, her favorite exercise had been bereft of all benefit or pleasure, and this day the conversation she had undergone with her adorer had been far from soothing. He had begun reproaching her for coldness and indifference, and she could not and did not specifically deny the charge. Very pale and tired she looked as she seated herself by the side of her friend, whom she was with every hour learning to love more dearly. Mrs. Tanner quickly marked her pallor and fatigue.

"Your ride has been far from enjoyable, I fear, Gracie," she said, and the long interview of the previous evening must have been of a most intimate nature to warrant such a piece of impertinence on Mrs. Tanner's part. "Mrs. Wilkins has told me the whole story." (Here the bright, beautiful head hid itself in the most convenient and natural resting-place it could find.) "Now I have one to tell you. Are you too tired to hear it? (What woman would be? The head was promptly shaken, though the face was still hidden. "Are you sure you are strong enough to tell it?" was indistinctly murmured.) "I do not propose to make an explanation," continued Mrs. Tanner, while a very sad, sweet smile played for a moment over her pallid face, "but the story is one I *want you* to hear."

And so in the solemn stillness and peace of the sick-room the truth came out. Slowly, gently, the patient sufferer, forgetting for a time the bitterness of her bereavement, her illness, her wrongs, told the

tale of her life since she had come into the regiment and Jack Truscott had come into her life; of the letters in which Captain Tanner had described him before they came East together; of his appearance and bearing at their wedding; of her sister's admiration for him and the correspondence that followed; of the engagement and her own misgiving because of that sister's acceptance of the attentions of the well-to-do widower at home. Of Jack's home-life with them on the frontier, his love for little Bertie, his devotion to the baby during her illness, his deep tenderness and sympathy when baby died. Ah, no wonder the tears rained down her worn face as she spoke of that. Of her sister's deceit and the rupture of their engagement, and of Jack's delicate and manly bearing towards her and her husband after that affair. Of the order to Arizona and her own misery at having to leave that little grave in far-away Kansas. Of his letters to her and to the captain during his separation from the troop, all preserved and cherished yet. Of his care of the little grave when they had gone, and his arrival at Fort Phoenix six months after.

"He came suddenly," she said, "and the captain was out on a scout. I heard his voice at the door and rushed down to greet him, and there on the table in the parlor was a box of earth in which were transplanted some of the flowers from Bertie's grave, that he, the loving, loyal fellow, had brought, cared for, watered, and watched through all that long journey. No wonder I could not speak. I could only sob my thanks, and I did throw my arms round his neck and would have kissed him, only he was too tall or astonished, or some-

thing. Here's my letter telling my husband all about it, Gracie, and if he thought no wrong of me, why should others? Of course *they* could not know, could not understand." And here Grace raised her own tearful face from the bosom whereon it had lain and twined her arms around the slender neck and kissed her, the pure lips meeting again and again.

And then the story went on. Of their pleasure at being ordered to join headquarters and to again be with Jack in garrison; of the trip to Prescott and their alarm when he did not appear; of his grief at the loss of "Apache." "It was to go with him and see his grave that I left you all at Olson's ranch that day." Of his distress at having to communicate to Captain Tanner the order sending him off on a dangerous mission the very anniversary of Bertie's death. "You know now what that was to me, Gracie. I had asked him to come and take me out on the bluff to see the last of them as they marched away, and when the call sounded, just as it did as my baby drew her last breath and lay dead in my arms, was it strange that one so ill as I am should swoon?" And then she told of the captain's letters to her and to Truscott, asking that those papers should be made out at once and sent by first mail to San Francisco; and how they had worked together in the library at the copies, and of his hearing the colonel's voice so late at night out on the road, and his going at once to see what was the matter. Of his departure to overtake her husband, and how strange she thought it that the adjutant should be sent on such a mission. Of his return; then of the receipt of the dreadful news, and she could speak no more. For

hours they clung to one another in silent sympathy, that infinite and merciful sweetness of communion which God has given to women who mourn, and then, comforted unspeakably, yet infinitely humbled, Grace Pelham went home.

The colonel was sitting moodily in his den, and even at her kiss and caress did not rouse himself from his abstraction.

"There's a letter for you from Ralph, dear," he said, dejectedly. "I'd like to know what's in it."

She tore it open. A few fond, hurried words of congratulation on her engagement. Mother's letter was just received. So proud and glad to think of her being so happily settled. Glenham *must* be a splendid fellow to win and deserve such a prize, etc., etc. Love to all. Ralph.

"P.S.—Need I tell you that it is with infinite relief that I found it was not Glenham at all who furnished the money that got me out of my scrape? I would have been horribly embarrassed had the benefactor turned out to be my future brother-in-law. It was Jack Truscott again and all the time, as I found when I went to make the first payment, and he made me believe it was Glenham. What a trump that fellow is!"

Without a word Grace stood there staring blankly at the last page.

"What is it, daughter?" asked the colonel, anxiously. She threw the letter on the desk before him, rushed from the room, and locked herself in her own.

Poor girl! Her thoughts as she lay there sobbing convulsively in her trouble were far from hopeful.

What had she done that in all the buoyancy of youth, health, and her radiant beauty this wretched blight should have fallen upon her? All that Mrs. Tanner had told her, all that she herself had begun to realize must be true of him, all that Ralph's letter revealed, only showed him, the lover whom she had spurned, in nobler, brighter colors; and this knightly soldier, this honest and courteous gentleman, this brilliant, gallant officer, this loyal, trusted friend, this gentle-hearted man whom she had seen sorrowing over the coffin of his comrade, or mingling his tears with those of that comrade's lonely little one; this Bayard without fear, without reproach, had laid his heart and honor at her feet, and she had turned from the priceless offering in contempt. She had not even deigned him one word of acknowledgment, and now, all too late! all too late! she knew that love her loyally, faithfully, tenderly as he might, no love could stand such a test as that. All too late she knew that love her loyally, faithfully, tenderly as he might, he could not love her better than she loved him. What reparation could she make? What could she say? What would she not do to win back one such look as she had seen in his dark, glowing eyes the day he told her of his love? And yet how could she utter one word that would not be a betrayal of her love that now might well be spurned in turn? How dare she do aught to recall him when—when—oh, merciful heaven! how at the thought she clutched her streaming hair in her quivering hands!—when she stood before him the betrothed wife of another,—another who too had wronged him?

With Ralph's letter the last stone in the fabric of

her regard for Glenham had been toppled to earth. In desperation at what she believed the utter dishonor of her lover she had yielded to the prayers of this other suitor and the vehement arguments of her mother. "You are even distressing your poor father" had been one of madame's points, and her father had shown plainly that he only tolerated Glenham on her account. Even respect for him was gone, for she had heard of his vacillation and final abandonment of the chance to go on this last scout. She knew, of course, of his abandonment of Truscott's roof. She had absolutely had to beg him to desist when, trying to defend his action to her, he ventured to disparage the best and most loyal friend he had ever found in the regiment, and now he was wearying her with his querulous complaints, his ceaseless moping. She had begged him to accept his freedom and give her hers, but he held her to her promise, and went and told her mother. Poor devil! Love had made an ass of him as it has of stronger men than he, and as for her mother—— Ah, no! Let that be unsaid. "Honor thy father and thy mother" she had lisped in her babyhood, and only within this last month had ambition for her robbed that wretched mother of the ready tribute of love and faith and honor that hitherto had been unfailing. Poor lady! Sorrowful indeed had been her life of late, but what would not be her terror could she see her husband's face as he sat staring at that letter of Ralph's, while Grace lay weeping in her room?

A hand turned the knob of the door and rattled impatiently.

"Grace, if you propose going to Mrs. Turner's this

evening it is time you were dressed," a dismal, monotonous voice was heard to say, and Grace started to her feet.

"Come what may, he shall know that I implore his forgiveness," said Grace to herself, as she stood before the mirror; "and come what may, Arthur Glenham shall know the truth."

Despite the general gloom in the garrison, Mrs. Turner had invited a few friends (which meant the entire commissioned force at the post, with the families of the married officers) to spend the evening at her house and mildly celebrate the birthday of her husband, whose birthday-cake, an elaborate affair, much studded with waxen tapers, had been sent all the way from San Francisco.

"It was a pity to lose it," she argued, "so, though we are all so blue, you know, over dear Captain Tanner's death, we might just as well have a quiet gathering."

Mrs. Wilkins had refused outright, she had other things to attend to, and Mrs. Tanner, of course, was not to be expected; but everybody else had accepted, as is customary, unless there be some valid reason to urge. Yet, when Turner himself invited Mr. Truscott, he felt it necessary to say a few apologetic words. "I know you will not care to come anyway, Jack, and I fear that you have heard that which cannot be wholly denied, that my wife had some share in the circulation of those stories that caused such horrible trouble. Of course, you must know how cut up I feel to think that such has been the case, but the tongue is an unruly member we are taught; and—well, when you get married, old man, may the Lord spare you from finding

out what ninety-nine out of a hundred husbands discover!—that a woman's tongue is simply uncontrollable. Of course, she's found out. I've told her that you have heard of her part in the affair, and she's awfully nervous about the way you'll meet her. I wouldn't tell any one else this about my wife, Jack, but I rated her roundly for her share of the mischief, and—and—I'll take it as a kindness if you will come and see us. You know well what you are to me."

And so it happened that late that evening Mr. Truscott's tall form appeared among the guests at Captain Turner's. Mrs. Turner welcomed him with vividly coloring cheeks and somewhat over-eager cordiality. As for him, his manner was simply as composed and placid as ever, and he accepted a seat by the side of his hostess quite as a matter of course. Grace was surrounded by the youngsters of the regiment, as was to be expected, and Mr. Glenham was pulling discontentedly at the scanty hairs which ornamented his upper lip. To this group speedily appeared Mr. Ray, lively as ever, and apparently imbued with a spirit of mischief. It had occurred to him that here was a good chance to worry Mrs. Pelham, whom he had learned to detest most cordially. The colonel had been most solemn and gloomy in his manner towards him ever since his refusal of the adjutancy, and he had enjoyed no opportunity of speaking to Grace herself, and, as bad luck would have it, she did not at all care to be monopolized by him, this night of all others. Her whole heart was bound up in Truscott. She noted his every movement, though her eyes bravely did their duty, and strove to look interested in the chatter of Messrs. Dana and

Hunter, and she managed to keep up her share in the conversation in a lively manner. How is it they can do it? If her heart were breaking, such a girl as Grace Pelham would manage to appear all life and vivacity under similar circumstances. Then Mr. Ray shouldered his way through the circle of admirers, and held forth his hand.

"I don't propose to be kept on the outskirts of this crowd all night, Miss Pelham, if I am the oldest and worst-singed moth around the candle. I've come in to bask a few minutes anyhow, scorch or no scorch."

She welcomed him cordially, of course. She liked him far better than any of the others. She had heard from Mrs. Wilkins all about his championship of Truscott's cause, and of his refusal of her father's offer. She could have blessed him for that. There was not a man fit to take her hero's place, and evidently her father had come to the same opinion. She knew that Glenham now disliked Ray, and there was just enough of feminine coquetry about her to make that reflection a cause of additional cordiality to Ray. But, above all, he was nearer to Truscott, more intimate with him now than any of the others, and though it was Truscott, and Truscott alone, she longed to speak to, Ray would answer when there was nothing better. He rattled on in his reckless, superficial style, totally ignoring Glenham or her new relations with him; and when supper-time came it was he who hovered about her, bringing every dainty he could lay hands on, and playing the devoted in a way he could plainly see was making Glenham rabid and Mrs. Pelham hideously uncomfortable. "I don't care," he said to himself, as Arthur

went scowlingly off to his would-be mother-in-law. "So long as they behaved decently I would, but now I don't care a chip what they think." But before very long he noticed a something in her manner he had never seen before. Bright as she was, and as she strove to be, he noted the wandering glance, the occasionally absent-minded replies, and it set him to thinking. Next he saw that Truscott and Colonel Pelham, punch-glasses in hand, were holding an earnest conversation, and that her eyes fled to that particular corner every other minute. "I mean to see what this means," said Mr. Ray to himself. Then,—“Was it possible, so early? Surely not going yet?” Mrs. Turner was saying all this in response to Truscott's quiet adieu, and Ray saw that Grace Pelham had lost all interest in anything he could say or do, and was gazing with wistful eyes after Truscott, who seemed bent on leaving the room at the time of all others when people would be too busy to note his departure, for supper was not over.

And Colonel Pelham went with him, quietly saying that he would return in time to escort madame home. Ray flew to the door.

“What's your hurry, Jack?”

“Come to my quarters when you get through,” was his answer. “I must see Mrs. Tanner for a while, as I leave for Prescott at reveille. Say nothing about it,” and he was off.

Ray returned to Miss Pelham, whose eyes looked in earnest questioning up into his.

“Isn't Mr. Truscott coming back? I had hoped to see him.”

"No. Something's up. I don't know what."

"He can't be—he is not ordered off, is he?" she exclaimed in startled tones, and with features rapidly paling despite her efforts at control.

Ray looked in amaze. Then he thought of the handkerchief, of Truscott's changed, worn look, of a hundred little things that flashed upon him all at once, and of the intensity of emotion in the sweet, pallid face before him. Quick as a flash, he bent over her as he had bent to raise her the day of the runaway; hurried and low he spoke.

"If you have anything to say, to send to him, trust me. He goes to Prescott at reveille, but told me not to speak of it."

Gone, and without a glance at her; without one word. Was she so utterly beneath him as that? Had she, then, sinned past all forgiveness? Was his love so light that it would vanish under the misunderstandings of the past week and never again seek for its answer? Was she—— Pride and resolution came to the rescue. Grace Pelham looked proudly up into the sympathetic features of the misguided young man.

"Thanks, Mr. Ray. Nothing that I can think of now. A little more coffee, if you please."

But she thanked heaven when it came time to go, and her father appeared. The colonel was sore disturbed about something, and while Mr. Glenham hung about the parlor on their return home, that gentleman had accompanied Lady Pelham aloft. There his voice was heard in vehement accents, hers in protestations, and presently in tears.

"I'll go," said Glenham, seeing her distress. "But I must see you to-morrow."

"Yes, go," she pleaded. "You surely want to say good-by to Mr. Truscott."

"Oh, he's only going up as witness on a court. He'll be back in three days."

She closed the door on him relentlessly, and that of the parlor as she returned. But her father came down at once.

"Grace dear," he asked, in a tone of deep agitation, "have you ever received a note written you by Mr. Truscott just before he went out after Captain Tanner's command?"

"Never, father."

Instantly he returned to the room above. And just what transpired in that interview heaven forbid that we should care to hear. The colonel had discovered that his wife had intercepted Truscott's letter to Grace, and that she had lied to him and to her. She well knew that Truscott, not Glenham, had been Ralph's benefactor.

Two evenings after a number of our friends at Sandy were gathered at the colonel's quarters. "Gloomy Glenham," as he was now called, Mrs. Turner, Mrs. Raymond, Grace, and Mrs. Pelham, the colonel, and several junior officers were seated around the parlor. Grace had just been singing, and now there came a demand for more.

"Oh, *do* sing 'Douglas, Tender and True,'" begged Mrs. Turner.

"Yes, *please* do," chimed in Mrs. Raymond.

"It's your very best song, I think," said Captain Turner. "Please sing it."

"Very well," said Grace, reluctantly. She had not

sung for days, and there were words to this that even in the mere temporary absence of Jack Truscott struck home to her heart as she thought of them. "I'm not in voice to-night, I fear," she added; "but I'll try."

Had not Mrs. Tanner told her he would be back on the morrow? Had not there been something in her sweet, caressing manner that revived hope, courage, love in her heart? She turned to the piano again, and Mr. Glenham placed the music on the rack. It was no favorite of his. The servant entered with a telegraphic despatch, which the colonel opened and read.

"I thought so," said he. "We've lost Truscott. He is ordered to West Point, and left this morning for San Francisco. Go on, Gracie."

Go on? go on? The room was whirling round her; a deadly choking sensation had seized her throat; there was a confused buzzing of voices in her ears, exclamations of surprise, regret, dismay; but she heard nothing distinctly. White as a sheet, she grasped at the key-board, and Glenham stood stupidly staring at her. But in an instant, through filmy eyes, she saw a glass of water before her, and she eagerly seized and drank it, and a cheery voice was murmuring something quick and stirring in her ear. It was Ray.

"Rally all your pluck. Sing as you rode, Miss Gracie; I'll back you to win." And with all the *nonchalance* in the world he replaced the goblet on a distant table, saying so that all could hear,—

"I really beg your pardon, Miss Pelham. When you asked for water I thought it was Glenham you addressed; and then that beggarly telegram came, and I forgot your request entirely."

Bravely, gallantly, she raised her head and strove to crush out the whirl of wretchedness in which her father's announcement had engulfed her. Hardly realizing what it was she was called upon to sing, she rapidly played the soft, sweet prelude, and, with voice that trembled as though in harmony with the spirit of the song, began,—

“Could ye come back to me, Douglas, Douglas,
In the old likeness that I knew,
I'd be so faithful, so loving, Douglas,
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true.”

All conversation had ceased; all ears were drinking in the exquisite, plaintive melody; all eyes were upon her, and she knew it. Oh, what would she not give to be singing anything—anything else? But it was too late now.

“I was not half worthy of you, Douglas,
Not half worthy the like of you;
Now all men beside you to me are shadows,
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true.”

“My God! can she do it?” muttered Ray, between his set teeth. “It's the next hurdle that will try her nerve.” And he leaned against the light table, looking quickly around upon its load of books and albums. Then his eyes returned to their eager watch. She was trembling; she threw back her head and forced herself to commence again,—

“O to bring back the days that are not!
Mine eyes were blinded, your words were few;
Do——”

Crash ! came table, books, Ray, and all in clattering uproar and confusion over the parlor floor. He sprang to his feet, all dust, embarrassment, and profuse apologies. Shouts of laughter, long, ringing peals of merriment filled the room. Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Raymond went almost into hysterics ; Raymond, Hunter, and Glenham guffawed outright ; the colonel almost choked into an apoplectic seizure, and Grace,—Grace covered her face in her handkerchief and wept hysterically until she could regain control of herself, and thanked and blessed him from the bottom of her heart.

“ Well, Mr. Ray,” gasped Mrs. Raymond, at length, “ that’s the first clumsy thing I ever knew you to do in my life.”

Only one pair of eyes besides his had seen that she could not sing another word ; that an utter break-down must come, and a flood of tears with it, and Mr. Ray anticipated the break-down, and provided a cover for the flood of tears. It might have been clumsy, but she knew better.

CHAPTER XXII.

AND now the winter is gone, the glad spring-time has come, the voice of the turtle would doubtless be heard in the land if that sort of melody were in vogue in these days of scepticism, and the promotion, which we are biblically assured cometh neither from the east nor from the west, nor from any source whatever, as is beginning to be the creed in our veteran army, has nevertheless come to Jack Truscott.

A vacancy has occurred in a popular staff department. Applicants for that majority are numbered by the dozen. Senators and Representatives in Congress assembled swarm about the White House to advocate the claims of captains by the score, of lieutenants by divisions, and there are majors in the line who wouldn't mind losing a year or two of rank to get out of frontier duty and into an easy office chair, with clerks and check-books and cigars *ad libitum*. There are old captains who have commanded divisions or brigades during the great war, fellows with unimpeachable records and undoubted ability and not a few battle-scars and gray hairs and grandchildren; old soldiers, who would gladly turn over their small squad of a company to some young and vigorous and unencumbered enthusiast, in whose breast hope springs eternal; old soldiers, who would lend dignity and honor to the department in

which the vacancy has occurred, and would thrice welcome the opportunity to see a prospect of a home before them and school for the youngsters. Congress is in session, important measures are up for discussion, yet the newspapers give daily a quarter of a column to telegraphic speculations as to whom the President will appoint to the vacancy in that department. Captain A. is warmly backed by Senator B. Other captains, with undeniable war records, are backed by the delegations of their States; but Captain C., who is a first cousin of a prominent inmate of the White House, has a capital chance, unless the President, in despair at having to choose from so many admirable war histories, should decide on Lieutenant D., only a few years out of the Point, and whose numerous friends at Washington are confident of his success.

At last the announcement is made. "The President has determined that the appointee shall represent the fighting branch of the service, and it is now known that his excellency will nominate a gallant officer of a distinguished cavalry regiment that has for years past been doing arduous and bloody work among the savages of Arizona." And eminently proper this seems to the army at large and to the general public, who have no personal interest in the candidates. And so it results that our gallant friends of the —th are recognized, and the promotion falls upon a distinguished officer of that distinguished regiment; and Captain Wormley, of the District of Columbia for years past, and known to the —th only upon its monthly returns, but having a wide circle of admiring friends in the Capital City, where he has been for years on some mysterious staff duty, becomes

Major Wormley of the —'s department. He is son of a statesman, nephew of a cabinet officer's lady, brother of a Congressman's wife, cousin of a War Department official, and cousin-german, so to speak, to half the pretty girls in Washington. Welcome, major, to your leaves and laurels, and long may you live to lord it over subsequent appointments by telling them that you "came in from the cavalry"!

"But it gives Jack Truscott the double-hurdles on his straps," shouted Mr. Ray, in huge delight. "Let's send him a royal old telegram of congratulation." And that evening, as he sits at dinner and receives the hearty greetings of the officers' mess on the far-away banks of the Hudson, Jack's heart turns to the old crowd in the —th, now marching in from Arizona. Their message had reached him.

So has another,—a letter from his loyal friend, the general's wife, who long since assured him that she knew "it would all come out right." So, too, has another still; for only this very day has he heard from Mrs. Tanner, and it must be admitted that Jack's thoughts wandered more upon what they had written than upon the elevation he had so unexpectedly attained. Extracts may be of interest to those who have found anything of interest in our story.

"Didn't I tell you so?" wrote the first. "Grace Pelham's engagement is broken at last. She never cared—she never *could* care for such a humdrum creature as Mr. Glenham. Why, Jack, when she came up here after you went East, he followed too, and it just used to make me sick the way he moped and whined around after her. She has tried a dozen times to get him

to release her, so everybody says, but he wouldn't. That mother of hers made her stick to her word (although I hear she had mighty small regard for her own), and the colonel of course would not interfere. Once they thought Mr. Ray was going to cut in and win her away; but *I know* that was just a real frank liking she had for him. Anyhow, the engagement's broken, and I have heard he's going to resign when they get East. She left here for San Francisco, with her mother, Mrs. Turner, and Mrs. Raymond, all under Ralph's charge, three days ago. Mrs. Wilkins swears she's going to march across the continent with the boys.

"Well, we're mighty sorry to lose the —th, though it did seem to run down-hill after you left. I'm not the only one that says so, Jack; so you needn't laugh. They will have better stations and all that sort of thing in the East, but all the ladies will join now, I suppose, and then won't there be fun?

"And now, Jack, you may say it's none of my business, but if you don't very soon write to me that you have succeeded in consoling a certain young lady for the loss of much valuable time and one lover, I shall be a disappointed woman."

Upon the same subject Mrs. Tanner wrote from her home in Massachusetts:

"Letters from the old regiment bring me most interesting news. There is no doubt that Mr. Glenham has at last released Grace Pelham from her engagement. Both Mrs. Wilkins and Mrs. Turner write to the same effect. She has been very unhappy in this tie to a man who was greatly her inferior, and the rupture of the engagement must be a relief inexpressible.

"Of course, both letters are filled with gossipy details as to how it was brought about; but, knowing your horror of all that sort of talk, I refrain. One thing, however, seems certain. It was *his* doing and is final.

"Jack, dear friend, I grew to know her so well and to love her dearly in those sad days at Sandy, but there were some matters of which we never spoke. You know how I grieved over the wrong done you by my own kith and kin years ago, and how I *must* want to see you happy. There was something more than suspicion in my mind that you and sweet Grace Pelham had been ruthlessly separated by misunderstanding—perhaps by design—at Sandy. There was some garri-son talk of a letter of yours that never reached her, and yet was delivered *for* her to Mrs. Pelham, and in some way I found it was generally known that she had sent back your spurs without a word of explanation. Have you those spurs yet, Jack? I fancy that if they were to find their way into her hands again, you might find it difficult to reclaim them."

That April evening a warm south wind was sweeping up the Hudson, and moist and sweet, bearing the faint perfume of the early lilacs upon its bosom, it played through the curtains of Truscott's open window. He had early left the mess, and separated from the officers who had strolled homeward with him. "Had letters to write," he explained, and yet, half an hour afterwards, when three or four lively comrades stopped under the window in the "Angle," and looked up, they abandoned the project of rushing in "to give Truscott a rattle over his promotion," for, said they, "he must be out." There was no light in his room.

No light burning from jet or lamp, perhaps, but Jack was there, and a light of hope, love, and deep thankfulness was burning in his heart of hearts, and he was thinking—thinking. Well he recalled that last night at Sandy. How old Pelham had walked home with him from the Turners', and in deep embarrassment had told him of Ralph's letter. Tears of gratitude and of deep emotion stood in the colonel's eyes and his voice was broken, his hand tremulous. That night all the old trust and affection was restored between them, but not a word was said of Mrs. Pelham or Grace until Jack reminded him that he had to go and see Mrs. Tanner a little while, and then it came out.

"I've got one thing I *must* ask you, Truscott. I've overheard some talk about a letter you sent to our house for Grace before you went out on that scout. She never got it, I understand. Did you ever send such a letter?"

"Yes, colonel, once, and no reply ever reached me."

"Then depend upon it, Jack, it never got to Grace; she was ill you know, and it—it must have been mislaid."

But now it was too late: the mischief was done. The colonel did not dream how much depended upon that little note, and not until long afterwards did he know the truth, that Mrs. Pelham had shown it to Arthur Glenham, and he had been weak—mean enough to read it. Then it was that under the influence of that indomitable woman he had removed from Truscott's quarters and afterwards accused him of treachery.

Well Jack recalled her sweet face and animated

manners as Grace sat conversing with Ray that night, and his sense of utter desolation as he left the garrison at sunrise. No one but he really knew that he expected to be met at Prescott by telegraphic orders to proceed at once to the Military Academy for duty in the department of tactics, and he dreaded the formal "good-byes" that would have to be undergone were the order to reach him while still at Sandy. And now he understood why she had never replied to that urgent little note of his, and bitterly he blamed himself for ever permitting the thought that she had received and had trifled with it as she had with his love. Over an hour he sat there plunged in deep thought, for even in his new-found hope and happiness he dared make no false step. Then he rapidly wrote a short letter, and on the following evening Mrs. Tanner received this query: "Where will a letter reach Miss Pelham?" On the third day the answer came: "Care of Adjutant-General, Division of the Missouri, Chicago. They are visiting friends there while waiting for the regiment to come in. Then they go to Fort Hays. They may visit Mrs. Treadwell there for a while."

One rainy, dripping, depressing morning a week later, while a damp, smoke-laden, coal-blackened fog had settled down on the wicked city of Chicago, and the minds of its denizens were more than ever disposed towards the inevitable ills that life in such an atmosphere must generate, three ladies of or beyond medium age sat yawning and disconsolate under the lighted chandelier in a comfortable parlor; a fourth—young, sweet, and vastly attractive—sat somewhat listlessly at

the piano, her slender hands wandered over the keys, and Schubert's beautiful, dreamy "Praise of Tears" softly rose and fell in plaintive melody through the silence of the room.

"For goodness' sake, Grace," exclaimed one of the elder ladies, pettishly, "*do* stop that dismal thing and play something lively! You will drive us all into our shrouds with such funeral stuff as that."

In vain the others protested it was lovely, and begged Grace Pelham to continue. Mamma had resumed her sway, and Grace, away from the supporting voice of her father, and no longer the prospective Mrs. Arthur Glenham, with a fortune at her disposal and a fool at her feet, had meekly, resignedly fallen back into her old habit of uncomplaining obedience.

A servant entered with the mail, handing to Mrs. Pelham two or three bulky letters, in which she immediately became engrossed, and to Grace a small parcel, at which the young lady glanced curiously, then eagerly, and then fled from the parlor.

Once safely in her own room, and with the door locked between her and would-be pursuers, she carried her prize to the window. It was small, compact, firmly wrapped in strong white paper, strongly tied, sealed, and registered. It was post-marked West Point, and needed only a glance at the superscription to tell her the sender's name. For an instant she held it, trembling from head to foot, then cut the strings, opened the little box, unrolled with quivering fingers and beating heart the dainty wrapping of tissue-paper, and came upon something white and soft, tied with ribbon. On it was a card.

"These are yours. The spurs you won at Sandy; the handkerchief you dropped at my door at Prescott, and in faith and constancy I have worn it till now.

"If you value that which you have won, hold it, and return to me the only semblance of the tie that has bound me to you, and it shall bind forever. If your prize be worthless to you, send it back, and in so doing break the tie. *Comme—fidèle.*

"J. G. T."

And Grace Pelham read till the tears blinded her eyes, dashed them away, then read again, tore open the little packet in which lay two silver spurs rolled in a snowy kerchief, which was rent and torn inexplicably, and which bore in white embroidery in the corner the simple name, "Grace."

And then she sank upon her knees, burying her bright, beautiful head in the pillow, and wept unrestrainedly, but oh! so humbly, so gratefully, so joyously, holding her treasures to her heart.

And three days more the torn handkerchief was back in Truscott's breast.

"Colonel," said he to the commandant of cadets the following morning, "I want a week's leave. It is an unusual time for one of the department to be away, but, as you know, I cannot leave in the summer. My regiment is just back in Kansas, and I want to run out to Fort Hays and see them. Mr. X., with your consent, will take charge of my duties. I will be back for muster on the 30th."

And the leave was granted. It would give him just time, provided there was no detention, to speed westward

to St. Louis, thence to Kansas City, and so on to Fort Hays, to spend twenty-four hours there, and then rush back the way he came. Not much satisfaction, possibly, for so long a journey, but he went.

Headquarters and four troops, with the band, had arrived at the little frontier post of Fort Hays, officers and men being still encamped upon the open prairie alongside, while those ladies who had hurried thither to meet their returning lords were hospitably entertained by the families in the garrison who had not yet moved away, and here it was that Mrs. Treadwell had thrown open the large and commodious quarters of the commanding officer to Mrs. and Miss Pelham. Here, too, were our old acquaintances, Mrs. Raymond and Mrs. Turner. Here were other ladies of the regiment whom it has not been the felicity of the reader to meet. Here, too, were three or four young ladies, gathered from neighboring posts, and ready and eager to put up with scant accommodation, for would there not be two bands at Hays for a while, and was there not to be given a grand ball by the outgoers to the incomers, and was not that big, empty barrack, with its polished wax floor, "the loveliest place in the world for a German"? Oh, bright and bonny and sunshiny and jubilant was everything and everybody at Hays in that glorious, radiant spring weather, and who more bright, who so bonny, who half so radiant and lovely as Grace? The colonel wondered at her brilliant color and sparkling eyes, marvelled at the lightness of her step, at the ringing music of her sweet voice. Sing! Why, she sang from morn till night.

"And yet," said one of the visitors, "you tell me she has been jilted by that young man with ten thousand a year who has just resigned. I would be down in sackcloth and ashes."

Would he write? Would he come? One or other she knew it would be, and that right soon. And so when Major Bucketts came stumping into the Treadwells' parlor one evening waving a despatch and beaming with delight, she felt sure what was coming before her father burst out with,—

"By Jove! that is good. Jack Truscott will be here to-night."

There was an impromptu dance going on, and thither Grace could not but wend her way, and her escort, a deeply-smitten youth of the infantry persuasion, was impatiently awaiting her. Dozens of young people were blithely dancing to the strains of sweet music from the tireless orchestra, and, though she danced unceasingly, joyously, the hours seemed to drag. It would be near midnight before the train from the East reached the station. Would it be late? Would the dance break up before he could come? Would Major Bucketts be stupid and take him off to his own quarters instead of bringing him there? Would he speak to her then? Could she see him? Could she look in his face and not betray to every soul in the room the glowing secret that seemed bursting from heart and brain? Eleven o'clock came at last, and then the minutes stretched into hours, and midnight lay a century away. Yet she was striving to be calm, striving to be bright and "entertaining" with her round of partners. Oh, how she tired of their chatter! their utterly vapid

efforts to amuse her! How she wished Ray were there! He would let her dance, or sit in silence and wait and think and dream, keeping vigilant guard lest others interfere, as he had learned to do for her in Arizona, yet interfering not himself; but Ray was far to the westward. Fate had assigned him elsewhere,—and midnight came at last. To her misery, the hop was breaking up, the dancers going home. Some had already left.

“Oh, can’t we have just one more waltz?” she implored, and obediently the leader signalled to his sleepy bandsmen. Then there was a rush and commotion at the doorway. Young officers were dropping their partners and precipitating themselves on a new arrival; a dozen glittering uniforms were crowding about a tall, soldierly-looking fellow in civilian’s dress who was being half dragged, half pushed, then carried, nearly smothered, into the hall. Mesdames Raymond and Turner rushed rapturously upon him, other dames followed suit. The younger damsels gazed with decorous curiosity, and Miss Pelham’s infantry escort, with misguided jocularly, inquired, “Who may be this lengthy party in cits? I suppose we may venture to dance, may we not?” And had he been a youth of brain he might have learned a lesson from the manner of her reply.

“Not just now. It’s Captain Truscott, our old adjutant.”

“Oh! That’s Jack Truscott, is it?” was all the crestfallen youth could say, and then they stood still and watched, and the band stopped playing.

Is the world made up of idiots? Could no one see

how his eyes were wandering over their heads about the room? Had not those little whip-snappers of boys more sense than to know that it was not on their account he had come all that distance? Would they never let him go? Would those absurd women never release him? Must he stand there patiently striving to answer a dozen questions asked at once while she stood waiting? And when he did break through, and came towards her with quick, eager step and a glorious light in his dark eyes, could they not even then see through it all? must they still hang to his skirts with idiotic inquiries of no earthly importance? Only for an instant could Grace glance up in those glowing hazel eyes, while her cheeks burned with their shy delight.

"I'm so glad to see you again," was all she had time to falter in response to his tremulous voice breathing only her name. Then he was dragged off, and she homewards. He to Bucketts's quarters, where his old comrades crowded around him till late towards morning; she to wait, with trembling joy, for the coming day.

Yet what did that bring? She was out at guard-mounting, so was he, and, breaking loose from the group surrounding him, came at once to meet her, and the wooden-headed imbeciles flocked instantly about them, and not a word alone had he in the hour they were together. Then came madame, with Mrs. Treadwell, and the carriage to take a drive. She had not known when to expect him, had promised to go, and could not now avert it. It was nearly one when they returned, and then they had to dress for luncheon at the doctor's. And he had been dragged off to stables by the colonel to see the new horses by the time they

came back, and the colonel did not release him until near retreat. Nor was he one instant alone with him. Even *his* placidity was sorely tried. "But never mind," he thought, "I dine at the Treadwells', and there, at least, there will be opportunity." Nevertheless, at parade, finding it impossible to separate her from the swarm of feminines who flocked about her, and the officers who gathered in clusters the instant they were dismissed from their duties, he turned to Bucketts.

"Old man, have the ambulance at Treadwell's at ten o'clock to take me to the station. Put my valise in, *and do all you can to keep the crowd away from there to-night.*" And Bucketts understood.

Even at dinner all went wrong. Oh, Mrs. Treadwell, either your tact had deserted you, or Lady Pelham's malign influence had been again at work. Grace was seated beyond his reach. He could not even see her, for she was on his side of the table, and there were other guests between them. Dinner was long, frightfully long.

"Jack, must you go to-night?" called the colonel to him. "Can't you wait until to-morrow's train? You will reach the Point by the 30th even then." And Truscott could only shake his head.

Would that ghastly dinner never end? It was nearly nine o'clock when they rose and strolled into the parlor. Then he went at once to her side. Two young officers were speaking to her then, but time was precious. She half moved forward to meet him.

"Must you go to-night?" she murmured, looking almost tearfully up in his eyes.

"Yes, at ten. Yet I cannot——"

"Captain Truscott, *Captain* Truscott, didn't you hear? Colonel Treadwell says won't you smoke?" And Mrs. Turner was pulling at his coat-sleeve. (Smoke at such a time!) "How ungallant you've grown! You used to be the soul of—why, *I* don't know—*devotion*, and here I had to call you twice—three times."

"*Did* you see Mrs. Tanner? Isn't it lovely she's so well off? Do you think she'll marry again?" Mrs. Raymond was firing at him from the other side.

"*Do* tell us about West Point. Is Mrs. Ruggles there now? *Why* do you have to go to-night? How stupid of you to come for so short a time!" Mrs. the doctor was having her say.

The other men, except two or three youngsters, were still in the dining-room smoking. What *could* be done? He was surrounded by these chattering magpies, and Grace was fairly driven from his side. Mrs. Pelham had called her. Mrs. Treadwell was asking her to sing. Then the women turned on her and *implored* her to sing. Everybody knows that right after dinner is the very time of all others one feels like singing. Grace had to sing, and it was half-past nine before the oldsters came out, and then tattoo drew several of the younger people away.

"*Surely*, you are going to the hop-room, Grace?" Mrs. Pelham was heard to say. "I heard Mr. Roberts asking you."

And Grace looked imploringly at her father.

"Indeed, she's not. Truscott's got to go in twenty minutes, and I want to see him, so does Grace," that veteran answered, stoutly.

Still there were a dozen people in the parlor, and time was spinning away. Grace was implored to sing again, and sing she had to. Mrs. Treadwell and Mrs. Pelham were chatting with the doctor at a distant end of the room. The colonel and Treadwell, lolling back in their easy-chairs, were beating time and enjoying the music. The doctor's wife and Mesdames Raymond and Turner were pestering Truscott with questions even as she sang. Grace was at the piano, and he had eagerly stepped to her side to turn over the leaves for her, but they called him away as the song ceased, and nervously looking at his watch, pulling savagely at his moustache, Jack Truscott commenced pacing rapidly up and down the parlor. How odd of him! How excitable for one ordinarily so calm!

Listening eagerly to his every word, listening in torture to their senseless chatter and questioning, Grace Pelham sat running dreamily over the exquisite music, the accompaniment of Kucken's "Good-night,—Farewell," an accompaniment that is a lovely song in itself.

"Yes indeed, Mr. Truscott—Captain Truscott, I mean," Mrs. Turner was saying, "we've been hearing all manner of accounts of you at West Point. I quite expected long ere this to hear of your being in love somewhere, and (coquettishly) forgetting all your old friends in the —th. *Of course*, now, with your captaincy, you will be seeking a wife?"

"Of course," he answered, with a sudden resumption of preternatural calmness, but still striding up and down.

"You mean to be married, *really*?" Vividly interested were the ladies now, and the sweet accompaniment went tremulously on.

"Certainly, I do."

"You *have* fallen in love, then?"

"Long ago."

"Oh, Mr. Truscott!" "Why, Captain Truscott!"

"Oh, when?" "What a surprise!" "Who is she?"

"Do tell us!" came in general chorus, even Pelham and Treadwell pricking up their ears.

"Are you really, *really* in love? *very* much?"

"I am—deeply."

"Then when are you to be married?"

[Breathless silence.]

"I don't know."

"Don't know! Why not?"

"Because I've never asked her yet."

"How absurd! Why haven't you? Doesn't she love you?"

"I've never asked her."

"Preposterous! What do you mean?"

"She knows you love her, does she not?"

"Yes."

"Then why don't you ask her? Why haven't you——"

"I have never had a chance, and at this rate never expect to get one."

(The accompaniment had wellnigh died away. Grace was bending blindly over her piano.)

"What can you mean? *Who* is it?" persisted that eminently brilliant cross-examiner, Mrs. Turner, though others with gradually expanding ideas were beginning to take in the situation.

He had stepped close by the piano, his watch again in his hand. The wheels of an ambulance rattled up

to the door. Proudly, almost defiantly, he turned and faced them all, then bent over the beautiful, bowed head, the trembling form that drooped over the keys. A wonderful depth of love, reverence, tenderness, passion thrilled through every word, as he murmured—

“Gracie. It is my only opportunity; but, before the world, if need be, I would say it proudly, I love you.”

The accompaniment had ceased. The sweet, blushing face was hidden by his arm. Before them all he had wooed and won her.

“All the world loves a lover” (unless it be the lady’s younger brother, when she has one). If not, how did it happen that on this particular evening that express train on the Kansas Pacific should be telegraphed as two hours late, and that Bucketts should find it out just in the “nick of time,” and bring word to Truscott as he was coming forth to drive to the station, taking leave of his sweet betrothed, even as he had had to plead his cause—before them all? Will it be believed that when the quartermaster appeared with his glad tidings and called out, “Jack, old boy, that train won’t be along till after midnight, so I’ll send the trap back to the corral,” Mrs. Turner absolutely proposed staying and making up a party to see him off, and was indignant because her husband spirited her off homewards? Then the others followed, and, thanks to Pelham’s resolution, Jack Truscott and his *fiancée* were left in peace. Mrs. Pelham, a martyred wife and mother, was sent to bed, and the colonel and Treadwell retired to the dining-room to smoke another cigar. It was the happiest night the colonel had known in ever so long.

And now the minutes flew like seconds; the blessed two hours whirled away. Once more 'twas almost time for the ambulance to rattle up to the house, and this time there could be no postponement. They were standing under the hanging-lamp in the centre of the room, the bright light shimmering through her rippling hair, and shining back from the beautiful eyes ever and anon raised so happily, so trustingly to his.

"There is something I want to ask you," she said, shyly, as another reference to his watch showed that they had but a few moments more to call their own. He was looking smilingly down into her bonny, blushing face.

"What is it, Gracie?"

"About the packet you sent me with the spurs. Was my handkerchief really so torn when I dropped it?"

"It was not torn at all."

"Then how did you come to abuse it so frightfully, sir? Is that the way you treat my property?"

He was smiling mischievously now.

"I kept it in as safe a spot as I could find," he answered.

"Where?" and her head drooped as she asked it.

"Very near to my heart, Miss Pelham."

"Then how came those jagged rents, I'd like to know?"

"An arrow did that, mademoiselle, the morning of Tanner's fight down in Tonto basin,—a day or two after you jilted me, to be explicit."

And for all response she could only bury her face

upon the breast where, at that moment, her torn treasured handkerchief was lying.

"What else have you to ask?" he questioned, as she presently glanced up into his eyes again.

"What does *comme—fidèle* mean?"

"Where is your French, Miss Pelham?"

"I never did know so very much, and this is utterly beyond me," she answered, laughingly. "You wrote it so queerly: *comme*, then a dash, then *fidèle*. There is no sense to it that I can see."

He drew her closer to his heart, and bent until his lips almost brushed the soft, perfumed ripples of her hair. "It has its meaning, though, and a deep one. It is my pledge to you, my darling,—*Fidèle—à la fin, comme—au commencement.*"

Presently the ambulance once more was heard, and old Pelham came blithely in.

"Grace dear, I'm going to drive over to the station with Truscott, and I want somebody with me coming back,—to keep the wolves away, you know," he added, with a Weller-like wink, very unbecoming such rank and dignity. "Run and wrap up warm, daughter."

Then, as she obediently went, the two men clasped hands and looked into each other's eyes.

"Does it occur to you that it was about time I asked your consent, sir?"

"You have had it—all along. God bless you, Jack!"

Will she ever forget that ride to the station, I wonder? How those scamps of bachelor officers poured forth from Bucketts's tent over in camp and surrounded the ambulance ostensibly to bid "him" good-by; the stage-whispers which passed between them.

"Good-by, Jack. We all meant to come over to the station to see you off, but the colonel gives us fits if we're up after midnight now."

"Take care of yourself, old man. *Say*, don't let the colonel see you go into Tommy Dunn's. *What!* Miss Pelham, you here too!"

She sat in the dark corner of the carriage, where she could dimly see his form as he leaned forward talking earnestly with her father as they drove rapidly over the smooth prairie roads. Not a word did she speak, but an inexpressible content and joy possessed her. He was going. It might be many a long weary month before she could see him again, but her heart went with him, and his?—ah, had it not been in her keeping for months past?

They reached the station; dark and still it looked: one faint light burning in the station-master's office; but thither the colonel found it necessary to go. The ambulance and its driver went off, oddly enough, and "hitched" directly in front of the very establishment Jack had been warned to shun. And then on the dark platform, lighted only by the glowing stars above, the red and green signal-lamps up and down the track, Grace Pelham and her lover were alone.

All too soon, far up the line the brilliant head-light of the train came sweeping into view. They were pacing slowly along the platform, her hands clasped upon his arm. She stopped suddenly.

"You have never asked me why—why Mr. Glenham broke our engagement, and I thought it was something you ought to know," she said, falteringly.

"I never intended to ask, Gracie, nor do I care to

question you about any of that wretched experience at Sandy," he said, tenderly.

"But it was something I want you to know, and I cannot tell you unless you ask."

"Then, I do ask," he answered, smiling.

"He told me two months ago that he knew I cared nothing for him, and asked me whom I did love?"

"And you told him——"

"That I loved you, Jack."

Both his arms were round her in an instant, his head bent down over the sweet face now buried on his breast. She *had* to raise it shyly and glance up into his eyes in answer to his appeal, then his lips sought hers, and their fervent pressure was answered. One moment more and he was eastward bound.

Many a letter came flying back to Hays. The daily mail was never without its missive for Grace, and even in separation some delight is found.

"Two weeks now I have been back at the Point," he wrote one May afternoon, "and never has the dear old spot looked so beautiful. It is hard to realize that these scenes, so familiar to you, so very familiar to me, have never been viewed together; that there ever has been a time in my life when I looked out upon that glorious reach up the river, and around upon the rocky heights, and knew not this now incessant longing to have you at my side. Time was when all my hope, ambition, pride, and pleasure were centred in the coming summer, with camp or furlough, when May with its verdure and sweet balmy breath was a foretaste of Paradise. *Now*, I wait with eager impatience for the

coming again of autumn, for the keen frosts that will shiver leaf and flower and rob the landscape of all this vernal beauty. Welcome, November, with frost and fog and gale, for none can chill the light and glory of my life, for with them comes its crowning blessing, for with them, and despite them, I shall welcome you, my wife, my darling, my queen."

And Truscott had many letters, congratulatory, exclamatory, and otherwise satisfactory. This was from Ray:

"DEAR JACK,—News just reached me. Bad news travels fast, you know. I'm cut up—cut out—and never was cut out for anything better. With all my heart I congratulate you, and wish it was *me*. As I can't walk to singing-school with her myself, please may I sit on the fence and watch out for you to go by? Anyhow, may the Fates deal you no end of blessings, and me, two or three full hands for the wedding present! There goes stable-call. *Toot à toi*.

"RAY.

"See here, Jack, I may not have had a clear idea on the subject before, but isn't this last capture of Miss Pelham's a new thing in '*Winning his Spurs*'?"

THE END.

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